Drugs, Pharmacy, Healing Rites, and Ethnobotany: Therapeutic Writing in the Foundational Narratives of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic

by

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Department of Spanish and Portuguese
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Abstract

Foundational narratives from the Hispanic Caribbean were involved in projects of political modernization and relied on stylistic novelty and political disagreement. Turn-of-the-century Puerto Rican and Dominican intellectuals prioritized three areas of political modernization—decolonization, emancipation of women, and some sort of racial justice. They looked at pharmacy for ways of structuring their literary imagination and proposed psychoactive writing to boost agency. My dissertation relates their approaches to pharmacy to their political goals. Eugenio María de Hostos abandoned the politics of harmonization and invested in narco-analysis to make colonial traumas accessible to the reader on the cognitive and emotional level. Hostos required stimulants to counteract inertia of the colonial subject and to disclose the implication of Creole elites, like himself, in the hegemonic regime. I connect his psychoactive writing and its effects on the body to the post-Hegelian dialectic theorized by Nietzsche and Jean-Luc Nancy. From a comparably elitist perspective, Amelia Francasci sought to legitimize her work by suggesting parallels with the institution of pharmacy, consistently suspect of quackery at the turn of the century. I claim that Francasci opposed the discourse of the sick woman. I frame her pharmaco-writing within global feminist struggles to regain access to pharmacy, for which I build on Larry Duffy’s study of the nineteenth-century institutional transformations of chemistry and pharmacy in France and examine their repercussions in Haiti and the
Dominican Republic. Two other writers I interpret—Francisco Gregorio Billini and Federico García Godoy—were more directly involved in Dominican politics and the state apparatus. They attempted to resolve what they perceived as national problems by assuaging racial tensions while exacerbating ethnic differences with Haiti. Billini and García Godoy incorporated Afro-Dominican healing rites into the national imagery yet misattributed them to European folklore. I suggest that such cultural appropriation of Afro-indigenous ethnobotany devalued Afro-indigenous connections.
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Introduction

In a wider connotation, our study considers the humanum not as a “process” essentially driven by labor, work, and action, but as a “rhythmic” reality, as well, in which biological and anthropological forces play their constant part.

—Hermann Herlinghaus

For Doris Sommer, “foundational fictions” refer to national romance as a genre or legacy of Romanticism as well as a political agenda of building up social harmony and consensus within the imagined national communities. I argue instead that foundational narratives from the Hispanic Caribbean—liberal and non-liberal alike—were as much involved in controversial projects of political modernization that relied on stylistic novelty and political disagreement. Turn-of-the-century Puerto Rican and Dominican intellectuals prioritized three areas of political modernization—decolonization, emancipation of women, and some sort of racial justice. Such otherwise dissimilar writers as Eugenio María de Hostos, Amelia Francasci, Francisco Gregorio Billini, and Federico García Godoy looked at pharmacy for ways of counteracting social inertia and boosting agency of the colonial subject, women, and othered Afro-Creoles. To this end they suggested psychoactive writing and structured their literary imagination around what I call “pharmaco-tropes.”

Through the study of a representative corpus, my argument displaces Puerto Rican and Dominican literary canon and shifts its focus onto the problematic of emancipations. The Puerto Rican literary canon consolidated in the 1930s when Antonio Pedreira, Tomás Blanco, Enrique Laguerre, Emilio Belaval, Margot Arce de Vázquez, Concha Meléndez, and Francisco Manrique Cabrera—collectively known as the nationalist Generación del treinta—retrospectively privileged the Naturalist interpretation of Puerto Rican reality as pathological and in want of elites’ interventions. Many of these writers were educators while Manrique Cabrera authored his influential Historia de la literatura puertorriqueña (1956). Together they managed to create enduring cultural readings of the nineteenth century. Even as current scholars such as Juan Gelpí, Luis Felipe Díaz, Silvia Álvarez Curbelo, Benigno Trigo, Ileana Rodríguez-Silva, Juan Duchesne Winter, and Fernando Feliú Matilla, among many others, deconstruct the fin-de-siècle Puerto Rican canon, they keep centering it around Naturalist narrative, specifically Manuel Zeno Gandía’s novel La charca (1894) and recently Salvador Brau and Francisco del Valle Atiles’ work. In his seminalLiteratura y paternalismo en Puerto Rico (1993), Gelpí concludes that Naturalist narrative occupies the core of the canon for denouncing colonial and neocolonial monstrosities and conceptualizing the nation as sick yet demanding redemption (16-7).
Trigo explains that the discourse of a “sick people” compensated for the European and later US imperialist image of the diseased tropics. This Naturalist discourse verging on eugenics insisted that while diseases, malnutrition, poor hygiene, and “deficient” racial composition did affect the peasant jíbaro population, urban elites were as modern as the metropolitan subject and likewise enjoyed relative health and progress. Meanwhile, Díaz claims that from Francisco Oller’s iconic painting *El velorio* (1893) to Luis Rafael Sánchez’s novel *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* (1976) the moribund child represents the lack of national sovereignty as idiotic and doomed infantilism.

In the Dominican Republic, Rosa Duarte’s archival and editorial work carried out in the name of her prócer brother Juan Pablo Duarte has dislodged the imaginative writings of Francasci whom Pedro Henríquez Ureña quite literally silenced considering that “De Amelia Francasci no hay que hablar; es la disparatera más grande entre las dominicanas” (Vega 125). At the same time, Manuel de Jesús Galván’s novel *Enriquillo* (1879) dominates much of the debates about the (mis)representations of Afro-Dominicans and their contributions to the national imagery. From Sommer to Silvio Torres-Saillant, Néstor Rodríguez, and Dawn Stinchcomb, many scholars analyze the prejudice against Afro-Creole agency through *Enriquillo*’s aesthetic investment in a specific type of the negotiating and eventually abiding indio and, by extension, mulatto subject.

Hostos, Francasci, García Godoy, and—even though to a considerably lesser degree—Billini uncomfortably positioned themselves at the limits of such historical grands récits for they intuited the major pitfalls of what they too believed to be progressive political projects. Imitating the thriving new science and Afro-indigenous faith healing, they opened to non-binary pharmaco-tropes. Through this peculiar diction, they touched on the margins of their own thinking and—perhaps unexpectedly for themselves—initiated modern writing in this way.

My argument disputes thoroughly assimilated implications of foundational narratives’ being zombie-like—reproducing movement, yet incapable of true departures and rigid, if not putrid, at the core. Accustomed to radical formal experimentations since the historical vanguards, many assume that turn-of-the-century writers on the increasingly global periphery were uncritically invested in modernization. On the continental scale, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Esteban Echeverría, José Victorino Lastarria, Alberto Blest Gana, Luis Orrego Luco, Jorge Isaacs, José Eustasio Rivera, and Rómulo Gallegos, among others, were state builders and positivists—utopian yet apparently backward
in the matters of social inclusion.\(^2\) Sommer defines them as “preparing national projects through prose fiction and implementing foundational fictions through legislative or military campaigns” (7).

According to the presently standard account (e.g., Julio Ramos, Aníbal González, and Gerard Aching), the incipient *modernismo* eclipsed such outmoded *letrado* authors. As Rivera and Gallegos’ border cases demonstrate, though, the succession was far from linear, and *letrado* remains keep haunting Latin American and Caribbean cultures. Given this context, I turn to an analysis of local knowledge production. Certainly, the issue at stake is not a geographical location per se but rather the imperative to critique power structures from the universalized standpoint, at the expense of aesthetic interventions of the time. Instead, I examine fragile and less bound on the periphery yet abundant discourses of knowledge, destabilization, and resistance.

Hermann Herlinghaus interprets Fernando Ortiz’s *El contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940) as one such decolonial undertaking to scrutinize “the role that narcotic plants from the New World have played, across the centuries, in the transatlantic formation of Western modernity,” which “brings peripheral thinking to the forefront of global reflection” (2).\(^3\) I argue that pharmaco-thinking, that of the Hispanic Caribbean fin-de-siècle and of Ortiz, on and under the influence of narcotics, at the metropolitan center and on the outskirts of modernity, unmistakably coming from the New World and imperialist capitalism engages emancipations by prompting or manipulating the human urge to justice and freedom. I adopt Herlinghaus’ definition of narcotics as heterogenous substances, with varying compositions and effects, all of which “work on the chemical messengers of the neurophysiological system” (2). Moreover, “In so doing, their effects combine with other factors—cultural and environmental—that also work on the brain-body chemistry” (2). In other words, narcotic non-substances such as intoxicating discourses trigger similar corporeal effects to drugs while drug effects vary depending on cultural and environmental aspects of intake. Pharmaco-thinking then labours to disentangle and make sense of the many complexities that fall within the “biologically and culturally charged” field of narcotics (Herlinghaus 2); and it does so in writing.

The turn-of-the-century pharmaco-thinking and its *doppelgänger*, therapeutic writing, belong on the margins of moral philosophy that sought answers to social ills of reimagined Latin American societies. In contrast to broad reformist projects of social regeneration, though, what I call therapeutic writing aspired to altering individual consciousness on design. Imitating modern science, this writing sought to distill and dose ancient psychoactives to better control and benefit from them. What slipped
from this seemingly all-rationalizing enterprise were some undesirable effects of *pharmakon.* Herlinghaus observes that since *pharmakon*, in Greek, “stands for poison, or magic potion, or medicine,” it “may well be the shifting signifier that embraces all three” (3). In addition to consciousness, therapeutic writing altered “mood”—that is, singular corporeal states. This plunged writing into the realm of the body precisely in the sense that it cancelled the narrow analytical divide between the mind and the anatomical body. The same plummeting, outwardly disorienting move opened the pathway for honest introspection, which translated into the diary and autobiographical writing in Hostos and Francasci. Ortiz’s pioneering work theorizes both faces of *pharmakon*—that of poison and medicine, their mutual dancing, counterpoints of attraction and repulsion. While he justifiably blamed slavery and the rise of imperialist trade on the sugar treadmill, “tobacco from Cuba eventually mellows into ‘holy smoke’ in order to furbish the mythology of urban progress and cosmopolitan identities” (Herlinghaus 3). Ortiz concluded that sugar and tobacco—few of the still legitimate narcotics from the New World at the time—have been used to make modernity more bearable, to ensure the modern subject endures its crisis or exhaustion.

Another later pharmaco-project, this time from Puerto Rico, brought decolonizing, race, and gender dynamics together, simultaneously demonstrating that fin-de-siècle pharmaco-thinking and the aesthetics of pathology kept informing modernization and emancipations throughout the twentieth century. I am referring to René Marqués’s essay “El puertorriqueño dócil” (1960) which relied on pharmaco-tropes to lift Pedreira’s symbolical ban on (post)colonial writing. Pedreira prioritized “real” afflictions of the nation over the “ornate” rhetorical apparatus. While political and cultural essays and discourses of his time claimed to revitalise the body politic, for Pedreira they further obfuscated what he considered to be Puerto Rico’s main issues—racial, sexual, and bourgeois degeneration and decay in modernity. Marqués refused any such ontological primacy to disease and, paraphrasing Trigo, opened a symbolic space where the (neo)colonial discourse of disease, pathology, disorder, hysteria, and the notorious Puerto Rican syndrome was repeated but also “interrogated, put into question, and exposed for all to see” (“Colonial Fetishism” 508). Unlike Pedreira, Marqués perceived the other side of *pharmakon*: in addition to the teche of “dorar la píldora,” writing was capable of grafting the discomforting “píldora amarga” into the collective unconscious.

In his classic *Insularismo* (1934), Pedreira discredited rhetoric because he believed that it substituted for critical reasoning. He based his argument on a series of metaphors and metonyms
linking rhetoric to pharmacy, and vice versa, and suspected both of fraud in contrast to the reliable “reality” of degeneration. According to Pedreira, the substitution of rhetoric for reasoning created the illusion of psychological wellbeing where there must have been none due to poor epidemiological, economic, or climatic conditions. From the onset of Spanish colonization, the imposition of a positive identity within the name Puerto Rico has allegedly precluded critical thinking by the colonized (143). From a historical perspective, Pedreira’s views reflected his distrust of the new period of party struggles after the Jones Act of Puerto Rico (1917) and the establishment of elections. He denounced the political legacy of populism that manipulated the public sphere not unlike barbers and pharmacists of the past profited from anemia and epidemics: “barbería y botica son visperas de comités y de tribuna”, the soporific “ritornelo de las innumerables comisiones que van a Washington?” (141). Moreover the local government, dependent from the federal one, operates from within the trasbotica at the back of the pharmacy. Trasbotica as a political space is a secret, non-transparent laboratory where suspicious potions and political slogans are being brewed interchangeably: “gobierno interior … se hincha superlativamente con fantasías de trasbotica” (141). Puerto Rican party politicians, immersed in internal disputes, appear not unlike their predecessors—barbers and pharmacists, that is experts in dressing up the “truth” and in alleviating symptoms without addressing the cause of disease.

However, in “Plato’s Pharmacy” Derrida exposed the reliance of “truth”/-“reality” on pharmaco-agents, the latter being infinitely appropriated and re-appropriated through rhetoric, knowledge production and writing/logos to accumulate what Benjamin called the “energies of intoxication.” Derrida examined the concepts of writing and rhetoric vis-a-vis logos. If logos used to be a spoken word of the king, the divine subject who dictates without pretending to persuade, then rhetoric is a more democratic art of persuasion and, at the same time, the ruse of simulating the “truth” of the divine logos. That is why in Plato’s Republic rhetoric belongs together with poetry and painting/zōgraphia as the production of the image of a copy, while writing imitates the voice perfectly “because it no longer imitates at all” (139). “[I]nfinite remove from truth” (138), that is from the king, writing is confusing. For Derrida, writing seduces, deludes, and takes one on a journey of becoming other, the king. Then Plato distrusts pharmakon because of its dangerous proximity to magic “opposed to the true practice of medicine, founded on science” (Derrida 72). Yet since the corruption of the divine truth in philosophy, logos cannot avoid this proximity to the “poisonous” side of pharmakon. In other words, medicine and Plato are still reluctant to learn to profit from the “energies of intoxication,” even though they cannot
help their contaminating closeness. In this sense Pedreira negated both the excessive rhetoric and the deceptive writing because he aspired to say the last “true” word on the nation’s ideal racial composition, proper women’s behaviour, and Hispanic cultural capital. Pedreira self-fashioned himself as a Puerto Rican *pater* and denounced everyone who dared to engage in rhetoric after him. Not surprisingly, he name-called his fraudulent imitators as infantile, docile, colonized, barbers, and pharmacists.

As Violeta Lorenzo observes, Pedreira’s project also “escamotea la gran influencia que tuvieron y tienen las culturas africanas y los afrodescendientes en la Isla y se vuelve racista al afirmar que el problema de los puertorriqueños es que no han podido vencer la indecisión que proviene de las ‘oleadas de sangre africana que empañan el gesto’” (256). In addition, Pedreira feared that the vagrant *jíbaro* and corrupted women were getting out of *letrado* control, slipping through into the public sphere because of what he seemed to have qualified as the unrealistic discourses of class equity and gender emancipation:

> Hemos aprendido a perfección a *dorar la píldora*. La vagancia se disfraza de indolencia o de desempleo, el crimen de homicidio. Las palabras estafador y ladrón van perdiendo su uso … y a la mujer que fuma, que bebe, que camina y que corre la calificamos como “moderna”. Para cada truhanería tenemos un paliativo, porque lo que importa es cubrir las formas. Y en el mismo sentido que doramos la píldora doramos nuestra vida. (146-7)

In his influential *Subjects of Crisis: Race and Gender as Disease in Latin America* (2000), Trigo studies the construct of vagrancy since the early colonial discourse through the work of Brau and Valle Atiles in the late nineteenth century. After the abolition of slavery in 1873, *letrados*, imagining themselves from the metropolitan perspective, found themselves in dangerous proximity to the vagrant peasant and his excessive, uncontrollable movement. To safeguard their privileged position, Brau and Valle Atiles, among others, displaced vagrancy and the associated ills of promiscuity and gambling onto the “blacks” and the “white” peasant woman whose “body then served as a buffer zone that kept the ‘white’ virile body of the *letrado* above the fray” (70). Although Pedreira approached euphemism—*píldora dorada*—as the word of the colonized which avoids “truth” and knowledge for the sake of appearances, for the *Generación del treinta*, the US rule posed the additional “threat” of the imminent loss of Hispanic cultural capital. Then “dorar la píldora” also meant to ignore growing
cultural alienation of the traditionally marginalized subjects who, for Pedreira, were the first to adopt “foreign”/US influences unless letrados quickly stepped in and taught them “their” “proper” culture.

Unlike Pedreira, Marqués did not despise rhetoric and pharmacy; rather Marqués himself imitated the pharmacist. He disproved Puerto Ricans’ psychological equilibrium by citing high suicide rates in the country (161-2) and recast the old colonial myth of docility—already criticized by Hostos—as his “píldora amarga” meant to substitute for Pedreira’s odious “píldora dorada”. In Trigo’s words, “According to Marqués, modern forms of [US] colonialism are at the origins of an unprecedented assault on the archaic, internal, defenses developed by Puerto Ricans” (512). By the “archaic, internal, defenses” Trigo understands the appeal to Hispanic patriarchy as a means to neutralize the metropolitan—Spanish and US—colonial discourse responsible for the “figures for the Puerto Rican subject as always suffering from diseases originating in a proximity to the feminine in general, and to the maternal in particular” (508). Marqués then identified the emerging “matriarchal pattern of Puerto Rican society” supposedly styled after the US matriarchy (509). This new “Americanized” matriarchal pattern threatened to replace the Hispanic patriarchal one advocated for by the elites. Letrados, like Marqués, interpreted Hispanic patriarchy as one last shelter of Puerto Ricans’ endangered masculinity to which Marqués misattributed some “natural” resistance to colonial oppression. From here, Marqués’ projects to “amplif[y] a primary violence against a symbolic mother, in the hopes of giving agency to the Puerto Rican subject” (521). At the same time, in his short story “En la popa hay un cuerpo reclinado” (1956) femicide turns out to be a self-harming castration thus exposing that defensive mechanisms “can cut both ways” (513) while “Colonized writing acquires a grotesque, even a monstrous form, which becomes impossible to ignore” (521).

What Trigo’s otherwise brilliant analysis bypasses are abundant pharmaco-dynamics in Marqués’ work. Besides exhibiting the ambiguities of matricidal fantasy, Marqués invested in psychoanalysis to graft his “píldora amarga” into the collective unconscious, at the limit where analytical distinctions between the body and the mind no longer made sense. Matricidal fantasy is one such “píldora amarga” that hypertrophies the imagined crisis to raise it from the subconscious level to consciousness. Otherwise Puerto Ricans treated the “subversive” intellectual of Pedreira type as a sacred totem that hoarded and thus alleviated the conscience of the community (199-200). For Marqués, euphemism is a sort of Freudian repression generating a neurotic subject ashamed of his colonized, docile self and—once aware—of his matricidal impulses. And to tame his “natural”
masculine resistance to colonial oppression, US propaganda supposedly allied with Puerto Rican women—the mother, wife, teacher, shop assistant, and around-the-corner pharmacist—to alter his consciousness, to drug him to the point that he becomes an acephal, a *Juan sin seso*, with no access to unaltered reality and matter itself such as soap, sugar, or milk. Thus “El puertorriqueño dócil” interprets docility as a disorder and an inadequate remedy against colonial amnesia, cultural alienation, and Americanization because the goad of subjugation—too foreign to men’s “nature”—promised Marqués to labour from within the medicalized self to, at least, expose his colonial traumas as a non-healing wound.

It is not by chance that the suspicion of writing in Pedreira went hand in hand with racial, class, and gender prejudice. This suspicion, even aversion to writing, signaled his disinterest to decrease political disenfranchisement of Afro-Puerto Ricans, peasants, and women, or any combination thereof. In Marqués, the mother figure infinitely reproduced in other abject female figures and blocked decolonization. This backdrop, by contrast, speaks to the boldness of many earlier, turn-of-the-century theoretical and aesthetical propositions on coloniality, race, and gender.

Before I detail the perspectives of Hostos, Francasci, Billini, and García Godoy on sovereignty, women’s emancipation, and projects aimed at the decrease of racial tensions, though, I want to set our expectations right in relation to the latter objective. It was the most controversial and received the least approval in the elitist public sphere. In contrast to the silencing and pathologizing of women’s writing through direct and indirect censorship, Billini and García Godoy inscribed Afro-Creole cultures of social healing in their narratives before they hastily effaced their own inscriptions leaving messy, scar-like erasures on the body politic. García Godoy exposed the race- and religion-based criminal violence of the White elites as they slaughtered the unsuspecting leader of the Afro-Dominican *hermandad* of the Holy Spirit and disappeared his corpse. The rumours circulate that it might have been buried somewhere around or disposed of, not unlike excrement, in a latrine. The police search fails; and by the time the narrator attempts to rip a mantle of the mystery, the thick *tinieblas* of ignorance conceal the murder. Rufino disappears as if the earth had swallowed him; from now on even God perhaps ignores “en el rincón de qué patio, a la vera de qué umbroso camino o en la soledad de qué escarpada montaña duerme Rufinito su eterno sueño” (120). This infinite erasure scars the communal memory as his dead body, nowhere to be found, multiplies at every turn of the pathway running through the community. Despite García Godoy’s clearly denouncing layout, his fraudulent modern narrator allies with the
murderous elites and vilifies Rufino. This narrative strategy raises several questions. Why did García Godoy abandon his authorial voice, aware as he was of rampant racism and scarce critical reading skills in the Dominican Republic? What could this hidden mutilated Black body say to Dominicans and why does it not? Or does it?

Turn-of-the-century intellectuals from the Hispanic Caribbean complimented the field of political activism by plotting stories and aesthetics intended to accumulate and manipulate enough psychic resources to bring forward new cultural players such as decolonized peoples, consolidated nations, free-acting women, and the deracialized subject. Future developments proved their projects to be, not unlike many potent drugs, extremely controversial and oftentimes detrimental to several social groups. This was specifically the case when the self-interested manipulation of othered subjects outweighed the pursuit of emancipation and self knowledge. In Billini’s *Baní o Engracia y Antoñita* (1892), the liberal state claimed not to discriminate against its citizens on the basis of race and skin colour yet was reluctant to redistribute power concentrated in the hands of White and occasional mixed-race elites. To accomplish this futile goal meant the expropriation of Black and indigenous cultural contributions—estranging, neutralizing, and even decréolizing Dominican cultural manifestations as if several centuries in the Americas had still left their mystical Spanish essence intact. Only in this way could liberals have claimed that the power distribution in the predominantly Afro-Creole Dominican society of the time reflected some “real” inputs of its distinct social groups.

Likewise, instead of denying Rufino’s ritual possession, García Godoy misinterpreted it as Afro-Dominicans’ hatred toward Haitians. He mediated Rufino’s possession through Don Quixote, while making the latter himself channel the fictitious chivalric rivalry between Christians and Moors.

The rhetorical operations of cultural dispossession created truth effects and turned Rufino’s sacrifice into a foundational point of historical forgetting and indistinction—a classical pharmakos upon whose expulsion a community strengthens its immunity. In his influential study *Violence and the Sacred* (1972), René Girard analyzed anthropological premises of sacrificial violence. He observed that the Greek pharmakos “was paraded about the city … used as a kind of sponge to sop up impurities, and afterward he was expelled from the community or killed in a ceremony that involved the entire populace” (9). Significantly, either a slave, an uninitiated child/teenager, or a king, pharmakos existed “on the fringes of society” (12). The fact that the king inhabits the center of the community is beside the point since here the center refers not so much to any privileged fixed location as it describes the
spacing of bodies in relation to one another. The pharmakoi form the outside that tightens the community together and constitutes the inside. In this context Rufino is a liminal subject because he touches on—is tangential to what García Godoy perceived as the “calamity” to be mended—phenotypical and religious kinship with Haitians. He is the king in this sense. Rufino keeps the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, invisible from his city of La Vega, as if before his inner eyes. He addresses, talks to this raya inscribed across himself. At the same time, his same Blackness—the narration emphasizes that he is both a dark mulatto and a typical peasant—and his ritual devotion to the Dominican military leader Pedro Santana binds Rufino to the Dominican side. Rufino’s death cannot be properly mourned because the vilified Afro-Caribbean affiliations are to be outed. To ensure loyalty of the ethnically and culturally diverse Dominican populations, though, the infinite inscription and erasure of Rufino’s Blackness and García Godoy’s indeterminate authorial positioning encourage Dominicans to identify with Rufino’s structures of feeling and being.

Before being appropriated by the larger body politic, though, Afro-Creole rites of healing must have passed through systems of knowledge production forged by intellectual elites. The pursuit of “truth”—or truth effects—inclined Hostos, Francasci, Billini, and García Godoy to look at fast-developing and diversifying science. Hostos mimicked chemistry and pharmacology. Francasci juxtaposed her quack, charlatan consciousness with that of the modern institution of pharmacy suspect of fraud and dishonest practice. Meanwhile Billini and García Godoy invested in the emerging disciplines of ethnography and folklore.

The exploration of metaphors and metonymies between science and the text allowed Hispanic Caribbean writers to manipulate the matter, substance and the substantial support of the “real.” By remembering his material engagements with slavery and class privilege, Hostos realized his involvement in and oversaturation with the dominant ideology. By the same token, if in the beginning Hostos did not associate his altered corporeal states with the ingested psychoactives, with time he learnt to detect the traces of intoxicating substances and non-substances alike in his writing process. Yet he attempted to erase all singularity from his maxims which he called estímulos to make them more suitable for mass consumption. In this way Hostos imitated the chemist and refined his public writing from the accidents of his life story to arouse political unrest in all Puerto Ricans. Francasci and Billini attempted to dodge materiality in contrasting ways. For Francasci, it was a matter of alleviating her gendered condition. There is a recurrent figure of turning away in her writing: a woman explores her
uncharted interiorities and is about to arrive at the ugly “naked” truth about her circumstances when, at
the last moment, she desists and returns to her medicated, in part withdrawn being. Billini and García
Godoy, in turn, advocated for a conditional inclusion of the othered Afro-Dominican into the body
politic. They suggested more citizenship rights for Afro-Dominicans at the expense of
dematerialization of Black Dominican cultures—specifically communal healing rites—and their
definite cultural dissociation from Haiti.

Other points in which Hostos, Francasci, Billini, and García Godoy’s heterogeneous writing
projects converged in relation to therapeutic writing were economic and legal aspects. All four related
political modernization, science, and corporeality (in tension with transcendence) to their countries’
economies and laws. For Hostos, economies of addiction and sublimation—e.g., transition from desire
to Romantic love—disguised the relations between exploitation and colonial dependence in Puerto
Rico and Cuba. He recalled his mother bribing him, as a child, into taking a bad-tasting medication.
Since all the excitement shifted onto his newly-acquired capital, Hostos immediately lost the intimate
connection with his body to the point that recovery became irrelevant to him. Hostos’ education did not
assume any healthy criticism of his parents. However, by narrating this and some other childhood
episodes, Hostos transmitted the sense that he avoided his family’s money ever since, despite being
painfully dependent on it for a while. Their capital implicated being trapped within his family’s
networks that sustained colonial regime and slavery. In his novel *La peregrinación de Bayoán* (1863),
Marién’s beauty similarly dazzles Hostos’ protagonist and makes him forget the horrors of slave labour
he had witnessed at her father’s *hacienda*.

Francasci invested resources in her body: she paid for frequent doctors’ visits, medicated
herself, followed diets, went on vacations by the sea, and changed dwellings to accommodate her needs
for improved air quality. She was an entrepreneur and ran the business “Nueva Feria” from behind the
scenes while her ailing husband Rafael de Leyba enjoyed the public and legal ownership. On the
paternal side, Francasci descended from a powerful Sephardic family of Marchenas which participated
in the uneven colonization of the Americas since before Columbus’ first expedition. At the time
Francasci was beginning her writing career in 1893, the dictator Ulises Heureaux—wary for his
disputed power—executed the former head of the National Bank of Santo Domingo and Francasci’s
cousin Eugenio Generoso de Marchena. Her solid socio-economic position gave her enough leverage to
resist the excessive controls of gender-biased medicine. The suffocating provincial atmosphere in the
Dominican capital city, on the other side, depressed Francasci. The Dominican economy signalled exhaustion. The government thoroughly policed most entrepreneurial movement. Business was a matter of personal loyalty and “services” to the government and of gender privilege, devaluing the enterprising spirit Francasci was cultured into through her family and ethnic backgrounds.

Francasci lived until the age of ninety-one and must have enjoyed rather good health. However, she realized that the ailing body—preferably consumptive, according to Susan Sontag—was her chance at independent investment and the revaluation of women’s subordinate part in society and in the elite household. Francasci exploited this monetary and aesthetic surplus of disease both in autobiographical and fictional registers. Yet, eventually she found her most profitable market niche in mental health: ever changing moods, “moral” crises, depression, suicidal thoughts, etc. In this way rather than undergoing some unpleasant physio treatments, she insisted that she required conversation therapy with prominent Dominican men, such as Fernando Arturo de Meriño, Emiliano Tejera, Federico Henríquez y Carvajal, Manuel de Jesús Galván, and others. Occasional participation in politics, Francasci believed, benefited her wellbeing. Similar economic metaphors mimicked the functioning of the Dominican public sphere. By their means Francasci managed not exactly to “fake” her disease in terms of the misogynistic discourse of the time (Thurschwell 18). Rather she persuaded everyone from her intimate circles that this was the remedy that required the least resources while rendering the most benefits.

Billini and García Godoy attempted to review the social contract in the Dominican Republic where racial discrimination was rampant. However, Billini “negotiated” the terms of the new contract without any meaningful input from Afro-Dominicans. There are significant textual clues that he perhaps intended a more inclusive nation, if not for nothing but to stimulate the declining agriculture on the “tierras comuneras”. However, he exposed his terms in a complex novelistic form meant for the educated public rather than poor peasants; hence Billini refused any popular discussion. He symbolically traded what must have already belonged to Afro-Dominicans—their constitutional citizenship rights—for their affective ties with Haitians and Afro-Cubans, all sharing Black Caribbean cultures of healing.

In addition to the economic framework, I examine ways by which the problematic of legality and legitimacy informed Puerto Rican and Dominican therapeutic writing. The search for “truth” in
Hostos, a failed lawyer, Chair of Constitutional Law at the University of Chile, and the author of *Lecciones de derecho constitucional* (1887), stumbles upon his unconstitutional, or extraconstitutional urge of liberation and decolonization. Even though the incompetent colonial politics of the Spanish *Sexenio Democrático* (1868-74) disillusioned Hostos promptly, he first supported the liberal Glorious Revolution and described his actions toward the Spanish police and French border patrol (2: 27-8) in terms of civil disobedience.

The legal framework complements a historical analysis of institutional transformations that pharmacy and popular Afro-Dominican medicine underwent in the nineteenth century. The public debate around divorce in the Dominican Republic (Vallejo 274) mitigated the Church’s censorship, which allowed Francasci and Billini to reflect on the institutions of marriage and family in relation to women’s intellectual growth and integration into the workforce, or lack thereof. In the realm of healthcare, I elaborate on Teresita Martinez-Vergne and April Mayes’ indispensable histories of race and citizenship rights in the Dominican Republic at the turn of the century. Another important source of historical information in the medical and pharmaceutical context are the fragmentary *Apuntes para la historia de la medicina de la isla de Santo Domingo* by Francisco Moscoso Puello. Unlicensed medical activity was repeatedly outlawed during the nineteenth century. However, as the colonial licencing institution of *Protomedicato*—never strong in the Caribbean to begin with—eroded, the laws were not enforced, neither in Santo Domingo nor even more so in remote rural zones where there was little to no alternative for medical assistance.

The scarce training of barely three years of the so-called *oficiales de sanidad* during the Haitian occupation and after was meant to satisfy the healthcare market demand, specifically for placements in military hospitals and treatment of the needy. Yet the introduction of the two-tier system of medical degrees together with various foreign-trained and unlicensed in the Dominican Republic medical practitioners—many of them quacks—further destabilized medical hierarchy. In this situation a pharmacist of the likes of Emiliano Tejera could receive a solid reputation as a medical doctor. In addition to selling the simples, preparations, and patent medicine from behind the counter, he consulted in his *trasbotica* and went on home visits to richer patients. The lack of competence distribution between doctors (who, in turn, sold pharmaceuticals illegally) and pharmacists made for shaky, semi-legal ground in the healthcare field. Few medical practitioners could boast they complied with Dominican laws rigorously. This made it easier for other actors, such as *letrado* renegades, women
writers, and faith healers, to reclaim therapy for themselves and to relate to pharmacists’ through their common charlatan, impostor’s consciousness.

Therefore, my dissertation places turn-of-the-century emancipations within the wider context of social and political modernizations. I study theoretical sites where the premodern and disempowered subject responds to the novel challenge of non-guaranteed participation in the sphere of freedoms and rights. To endure the drive of democratic participation or to boost it in the other—problematically deemed “inert”—many intellectuals turned to the contiguous field of technological innovations and modern updates of obsolete legal systems, stagnated economies, and science/“truth”/knowledge production in the colonies.

In Chapter 1, I examine ways by which the colonial condition of Puerto Rico and Cuba prompted Hostos to despise the official “truth” and undertake an uneven course of narcoanalysis. When Hostos set up to analyze his life in Diario, he first registered various defense mechanisms—among them his chronic apathy—that drained his psychic resources and hence precluded the decolonization of consciousness. Hostos treated his apathy and melancholy as symptomatic of a colonized consciousness thus closing—this no prospect to end—a vicious circle within the colonial subject. Today’s readers can see that in the beginning Hostos still ignored that the metropolis cultivated a medicalized society strategically while his induced apathy also drained his scarce economic resources.

First, Hostos blamed his problems on his Caribbean addiction—coffee. Yet with time this Caribbean stimulant roused his pains to the point that they undid the metropolitan biopolitical work of medication, which made Hostos discover narcoanalysis. Hostos was from a relatively well-off letrado family in Puerto Rico, yet he refused to follow in his father’s steps and abandoned his career in law. I draw on Ángel Rama’s classical inscription of the letrado subject within the city walls demarcating the rule of law and order. In the context of letrados studies, Hostos’ writing is unique because we also have his father’s memoir at our disposal—composed on the reverse side of scrap papers of this hereditary royal scrivener and plagued by abbreviations to save precious space. Eugenio Hostos Rodríguez’s narration is as dry as formulaic legal language can get and extremely vague to avoid alluding to any specific person. I interpret the writing of Hostos’ father as a hinge that separates Hostos from but also communicates with him the colonial letrado culture. By means of this contrast I detect a breakthrough in Hostos’ Diario from the inherited model of colonial decency and reserve at the beginning of the
diary, meant to protect the reputation of unmarried women and clandestine revolutionary politics, to a progressively indecent writing, wary of the colonial hegemonic “truths.” Through his new, out of control style Hostos sought to undermine the colonial order and liberate/decolonize his consciousness of an elite subject, burdened by the histories of conquest and abuse in the Americas.

Thus I approach discursive intoxications with the “proper” in Hostos from within his letrado legacy and inherited writing habits. However, I recur to Ernesto Laclau’s concept of imagined “radical otherness” to project Hostos’ emancipation program toward extra muros of the lettered city. Hostos wrote a complex, aesthetically-accomplished politico-philosophical novel, La peregrinación de Bayoán, in which he concluded that the reformation of the colonial system was structurally unfeasible. According to his testimony, he intended La peregrinación de Bayoán to gain literary fame for himself. However, the process of writing coincided with the crisis of personal dissociation from his family and, far from mitigating Hostos’ existential malaise, exacerbated it by revealing the urgency of Puerto Rico’s separation from Spain (Diario 26). In other words, Hostos began writing hoping to discover ways for transformation of the colonial administration, yet as he approached this topic from multiple perspectives, they all pointed to the failure of reformist logic.

For the purposes of my analysis, I distinguish two types of intoxication in Hostos: on the one hand, intoxication as an effect of psychoactive substances and non-substances, such as propaganda, and, on the other hand, intoxications labouring from within, because of introspection that leaves no untouched outside. I match Jean-Luc Nancy’s reading of the proper in Hegel with his (Nancy’s) interpretation of Socratic introspection. In Hegel, Nancy relates the proper and propriety to sense-work, that is the dialectical production of new senses in modernity when transcendental givens wither/disappear in the silence/absence of God. The polysemy of the proper separates property in a juridical understanding as a thing from the proper as the outcome of (re-)appropriation—the “sense of a thing”—which enters “into the sphere of my action and my personality” and signifies “a relation of coming to self” (Hegel 47). Thus “proper” (re-)appropriation presupposes infinite dialectical separation of myself and the other as well as the other’s (un)becoming my other; yet this other, (re-)appropriated as mine, immediately slips away from the tangles of dependence to avoid the identity, being identical to itself, of a thing. This restless production of significations causes a vertigo comparable to that of Socrates’ introspection. In the Symposium, his thorough introspection opens an abyss of indistinction while his maxim “Know yourself!” intoxicates in the sense of loosening the self and of forcing him to
spill, to overflow. Socrates’ intoxication turns out to be superior to vulgar boozing. This accounts for the emergence of new *letrados* as well, inebriated with the “proper” at the heart of their sobriety and positivism.

Rama and Ramos insist that *letrados* gradually evolved into professional writers with the onset of *modernismo* at the end of the nineteenth century. However, I claim that their partial professionalization and distinct style, influenced by journalistic chronicle, was less of a radical break and more of a new turn in *letrado* culture. This turn was due to *modernista* writers and beyond problematic relations with the “proper” later conceptualized in Latin American cultural essays as the “authentic” or the “idiosyncratic.” New *letrados* claimed their expertise to design cultural values and to stratify “smooth,” in theory, space (Deleuze) of the nation into some sort of hierarchical order. New *letrados* of the likes of Hostos can be visualized as throwing themselves once and again into a redistribution circle only to realize that they are too fascinated with the prospect of legitimate ownership, of “bad” propriety in Hegelian terms, to open themselves to new encounters and to explore the self’s unmapped territories.

Yet I situate Hostos’ writing within a post-Hegelian, rather than a Krauso-positivist philosophical paradigm. I recur to the seminal studies of Juan López-Morillas and more recently Gonzalo Capellán de Miguel for a historical contextualization of Krauso-positivism and the politics of harmonization in Spain since the *Sexenio democrático*. They explain that Krausism fed on Hegelian dialectic but turned the latter on its head by resolving, without remains, dialectical oppositions into harmony. Therefore in the social realm, Krausists advocated for consensus and reconciliation of political divides. As such, Krausism in principle denied independence to Cuba and Puerto Rico. Instead a Hegelian-type dialectic—represented at the time Hostos attended the Central University of Madrid by Emilio Castelar’s revolutionary rhetoric—counted as the progressive left. Yet as Hostos began writing and promoting national liberation and emancipation of consciousness/decolonization, he grew increasingly aware of the fact that the non-stop vortex of symbolic (re-)appropriations produced vertigo and intoxicated the body. Drawing on Mexican philosopher Antonio Caso’s early insights, I interpret Hostos’ writing as verging on Nietzsche and hence post-Hegelian and pharmaco-dialectical. On the other hand, positivism in Hostos implied his epistemological openness to scientific research and accounted for his method of narcoanalysis meant both to increase one’s self-awareness and to take advantage of the “energies of intoxication.”
To summarize, Hostos realized that Hegelian dialectic was the best method of dissociation because it exposed the absence of any stable, pre-existing “truth” and substituted it with a restless sense-work, production of meanings out of contradictions of the specific historical situation. At the same time and not unlike Nietzsche, Hostos went one step further for he was able to see in the Americas that this sense-work saturated the body, including the textual body, to the point of intoxication.

In Chapter 2 I analyze Francasci’s writing project which elaborated on parallels between political emancipations and scientific reasoning insofar as both were dissolving the age-long interpretative paradigms of institutionalized Christianity. In other words, Francasci approached “new” science as laying claims to “truth” and hence disputing the Church’s monopoly on the production of senses. Most importantly, though, Francasci discovered interdisciplinary disagreements in science that were diversifying into partly autonomous branches of knowledge, such as medicine, chemistry, pharmacy, and toxicology.

Coaxed into normative social behaviour—married, nursing her ailing husband, and staying away from the public sphere—Francasci manipulated the turn-of-the-century aesthetics of the sick woman and claimed her right to healthcare and medication. The introduction of several consulting doctors into “her” “private” household allowed Francasci to ease the domestic controls of her husband Rafael de Leyba and her reputable brother Eugenio de Marchena. She quickly built up on this dispersion of male power by inviting in a former Dominican President, Archbishop Meriño, as her confessor, and next, his political adversary—a pharmacist and charlatan doctor Emiliano Tejera.

Thus I start my argument by questioning the undisputed association between Francasci and the Dominican Archbishop Meriño. Francasci explained that even though she knew of her literary calling since adolescence, her family and the acute feeling of self-censorship prevented her from writing for the public. After Meriño’s death, Francasci explored the complexities of self-figuration upon confronting his vanishing presence in her own writing in *Monseñor de Meriño Íntimo* (1926). She realized that her attempts to write his epitaph and render vivid his image before her eyes (224) disguised the impulse to come to terms with her own self, flickering in a series of see-saw movements amongst the rhetorical gimmicks of prosopopoeia (in Paul de Man’s sense, from the Greek *prosopon poien*, “to confer a mask or a face” 926). Through Meriño’s portraits and anecdotes about him of
Francasci’s authorship, she projected her own self out there and reaffirmed her professional identity. At the same time, because of stings of her charlatan consciousness and conscience (“conciencia” in Spanish), Francasci refused the intimate knowledge of her erratic self and turned away from phantasms of inauthenticity—highly valued by de Man as self-reflexive moments of narration.

I use the concept of “charlatan consciousness” to theorize women’s writing and the increasingly non-Galenic pharmacy as “grey,” that is supposedly untrustworthy, areas in nineteenth-century literature and science and their mutual legitimization. Since new pharmaceutical discoveries—based on scientific argumentation and experiment and documented in professional literature—were negligible in the Dominican Republic, I apply Larry Duffy’s framework of pharmacy as a profession in addition to a specific knowledge system. His approach allows me to examine Francasci and others’ ways of capitalizing on, using to their advantage their charlatan, quack consciousness. Duffy reads Madame Bovary as a text primarily about the encroachment of modern pharmacy on medical authority. He studies the redefinition of pharmacy after the separation of chemistry into an autonomous “philosophical”/theoretical field and explains ways by which this institutional transformation laid the basis for the forthcoming pharmaceutical innovation. Since pharmacists did not feel like lagging behind chemists, they took on a new role of scientists rather than mere craftsmen. To fill out the gaps in their new professional identity, French pharmacists doubled their efforts and invested into reading scientific literature, performing toxicological and chemical analyses, and extending their expertise into hygiene and agriculture.

Flaubert criticized this “new” pharmacy represented by Homais in Madame Bovary since its redefinition relied on symbolic “purification.” This translated into banning access to women and, in the long run, degrading many traditional health practitioners, such as midwives and faith healers. I examine the repercussions of this process in the Dominican Republic in detail in Chapter 3. In Flaubert modern pharmacy is alluring, yet pathetically ineffective. As doctor Larivièrè notes, Emma Bovary would likely have survived had Homais provoked vomiting upon the first signs of poisoning instead of imitating a scientist and meticulously and impartially observing the course of her dying. I argue that Flaubert’s writing enticed and challenged Francasci’s literary imagination. Francisca Martinoff, Francasci’s protagonist, self-induces abortion and commits suicide by poisoning herself with laudanum in a Bovary-like manner. And only after establishing the prestigious literary precedent of the
correspondence between Flaubert and George Sand, did Francasci dare to render in writing her intimate friendship with the Dominican Archbishop.

In a similar manner, Madame Bovary narrates the misfortunes of a woman suddenly denied access to psychoactives and the degradation of the medical profession. Duffy builds on Jonathan Simon’s research in Chemistry, Pharmacy and Revolution in France, 1777-1809 about the two-tier system of health practitioners under the Empire and July Monarchy. Unstable political regimes, the urge to optimize social institutions and to make medicine more cost-effective, all contributed to the introduction of locally-trained officiers de santé whose licenses were limited to their specific rural area. Emma establishes disadvantageous alliances: a provincial officier de santé Charles Bovary loses all medical authority and hence interest in the eyes of Emma the addict as the center of gravity shifts to the proscribed Homais’ laboratory. I compare the corroding state of medicine versus the relative prosperity of pharmacy in France with parallel processes in the Caribbean, specifically with Pedreira’s locating the site of clandestine yet futile anti-colonial politics in a provincial trasbotica. I complement Duffy’s criticism with Avital Ronell’s intuition that Emma’s “being-on-drugs” does not alienate her from “truth” but rather allows her to grasp, to gain true knowledge of her gendered being as a woman, a wife, and a mother—dull and stagnated in the exhausted economy of the sexes. From within this economy, because modernity is heavily invested in the drug industry, narcotic trips provide Emma and by extension Francasci and her heroines with unrestricted access to their repressed interiorities and tabooed urges.

In Chapter 3 I study the place of Afro-indigenous ethnobotany and syncretic Caribbean religions of African inspirations in the displaced canon of Dominican literature. I focus on therapeutic aspects of vudú, palo, spiritism, and santería as ways to build contingent communities and to center on community wellbeing and social ties in addition to the affected body.9 However, the idea of healing underwent significant historical changes in most Afro-Creole rites. Pablo Gómez locates Black Caribbean healers’ therapeutics during the long seventeenth century within the realm of experimentation, community building, and openness to Native Caribbean knowledge. According to Hugh Cagle, “How things felt, tasted, smelled, looked and sounded became the basis for assertions about the cause and treatment of disease” (134). Black Caribbean ways of knowing and healing contributed to new empirical epistemologies in metropolitan European centers. Healing rites in public places and in the presence of diverse multilingual neighbours bounded them together into a community
around the site of healing. At the same time, Gómez studies collaborations of partially acculturated first-generation African bozales and Afro-Creoles with indigenous communities, specifically the transmission of botanical and therapeutic knowledge between the two groups. He concludes that in the early modern period, before the massive introduction of sugar plantation systems and the related increase of slave labour, Black Caribbean healers were leading healthcare providers on the cutting edge of modern epistemologies.

This historical framework allows me to reframe debates around so-called popular religions in the Dominican Republic. This umbrella term inscribes heterogeneous religions somewhere in between folklore, in the narrow meaning of things of the past, and the picturesque if not as dangerous superstitions of uneducated peasantry. Instead Todd Ramón Ochoa understands Kongo-inspired Palo Briyumba in Cuba beyond “a static sense of belief and practice” (8) and suggests that the concept of “African inspirations” better captures their creativity and openness toward the new. Also, if we compare the scope of Black Caribbean healing in the early modern period and nowadays or the current role of faith healers in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, we will see that the present-day state of syncretic Caribbean religions depends on the severity of their stigmatization throughout national histories.

The adverse attitude of the elites caused a decline in many ritual ceremonies and public healings together with the proliferation of more esoteric/“philosophical” rites in palo and spiritism since the late nineteenth century. For example, turn-of-the-century efforts to institutionalize “philosophical” Spiritism in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic relied on what I criticize as dematerialization of Afro-Caribbean therapeutics. Dematerialization meant that frictions, water, dirt, feathers, and sticks—even though always part of African and African-inspired healing and harming practices—replaced herbs and medical procedures outlawed to ritual practitioners. Healing shifted to more secluded, specifically designed spaces for the initiates. On the other hand, “philosophical” Spiritism exaggerated its European inspirations—in the work of Allan Kardec, which resulted in dispossession of Black histories and cultural identities.

Although freedoms of worship and religion have been, with varied success, among fundamental human rights in modernity, the persecution of syncretic religions and healing rites was aggravated in the Hispanic Caribbean during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Fernando Ortiz documented the
decline of African-inspired cabildos through a series of repressive laws against them in Cuba in the 1880s. For example, the Bando del Gobierno Civil Provincial of December 19, 1884 prohibited cabildo’s gatherings and public circulation at Christmas night and on the Epiphany, even though el Día de Reyes was their major religious festival (1). As a result, observed Ortiz, “el 6 de enero de 1885 fue la primera Epifanía silenciosa que tuvo Cuba” (11). Likewise, Reinaldo Román describes the polemic in Puerto Rico in the 1920s around the figure of espiritualista médica Julia Vásquez, better known as La Samaritana of San Lorenzo. A poor jíbara and a woman of color, La Samaritana caused nation-wide media debates and skirmishes within such organizations as Aguadilla’s Club de Estudios Psicológicos Ramón Emeterio Betances and the federation of Puerto Rican Spiritists. However, she only used “a minimalist kind of hydrotherapy” (Ramón 116)—a rather common among Spiritists, agua fluidizada from a local spring.

In the Dominican Republic the persecution of faith healers was the most severe and involved police raids and military campaigns. This, on the other hand, testifies to the political potential of vudú and makes it a compelling case study. In 1904, the popular poet Juan Antonio Alix in his oft-cited poem “Las bailarinas del judú en la calle de Santa Ana” praised “[l]a señora policía” for raiding a judú gathering, presided by a Haitian, and arresting its members. The lyrical narrator appears to be scandalized by their nudity: “Y unos infelices santos / En dicho altar se encontraban / Y aquel baile presenciaban / Sin cubrirlos con sus mantos”. He further mocks ritual possession describing an entranced woman as “una bailarina / Con muy crueles convulsiones” (cit. in Rodríguez Demorizi 98). Jan Lundius and Mats Lundahl thoroughly researched the history of extermination by the regular army of “rebellious” Afro-Dominican curandero Olivorio Mateo Ledesma, or Papá Liborio together with dozens of his followers in 1922. Four decades later in 1962, around six hundred followers of the Liborista movement were destroyed by a napalm airstrike in Palma Sola, in the San Juan border province.

Prior to, yet in some sense preparing the ground for future atrocities, were turn-of-the-century rhetorical operations that replaced elements of Afro-Creole material culture with structurally “comparable” and “preferable” customs of reinvented Dominican folklore. Therefore, instead of looking for representations of vudú in Billini and García Godoy, I pursue “weird” aesthetical competitors that they designed to dispute and seize power from vuduíst spiritual leaders over predominantly Black and mixed-race peasantry. As folklore and ethnography grew in vogue in Europe,
Billini simulated their methods and claimed that Dominican ethnobotany was of indigenous origin, not unlike the supposedly predominant Dominican phenotype. He pretended to ignore the fact that by the 1890s “indigenous” ethnobotany had been preserved, complemented, and reinterpreted by Afro-Creole faith healers for around four centuries. There was not and could not have been—except in elites’ imaginations—any competition between Black and indigenous medicinal and botanical knowledge.

However, the novel *Baní o Engracia y Antoñita* stages some odd ecological competition between the *guazábara* and *bayahonda* ecologies. I draw on Denis Cosgrove’s pioneering research about the significance of the category of landscape for nation state building. He illustrated that the national landscape was co-produced by several modern institutions such as geography, arts, and literature. In addition, Cosgrove explored motivations behind the preference of specific locales and qualities of the terrain at the expense of others. Billini shifted the Dominican national landscape from the sensual tropical coastline to the semi-desert dry scrub (*matorral seco*). He imbued the latter with superior moral qualities of “extinct” Native Caribbeans and contended that their endurance laid the basis for mixed-race Dominicanness. I interpret his dry scrub as a liminal zone that separates the traditionally White coastline from the mountain forest, used to shelter maroon settlements, at the same time as it expropriates the latter into the national territory of *indios*.

Next Billini translated earlier Dominican-Haitian military conflicts into the biologically overdetermined language of endemic (indigenous *guazábara*) and foreign, invasive (*bayahonda*) species. He dispossessed Afro-Dominicans of potent narcotic substances—such as *quibey*—whose traffic and symbolism, as Herlinghaus convincingly claims, has shaped the “transatlantic formation of Western modernity.” As if this was not enough, Billini and García Godoy decreolized Hispanic cultural contributions by over-relying on the allegedly unaltered European essence of Dominican folklore. For example, I demonstrate the oddity of the figure of heliotrope, a once-popular meta-metaphor of “high” poetic tradition in Europe (Travis 171). In Billini’s novel, heliotrope preserves its structural complexity yet looks unconvincing transplanted onto the weeded rural plaza in Bani.

Billini reinterpreted Our Lady of Regla, patroness of Bani, as yet another solar image, heliotrope. He dissociated the Dominican Regla from the Black patroness of the Havana bay and municipality of Regla, known as “Africa’s heart in Cuba” (Miguel “Willie” Ramos 9). Afro-Cubans worship the Santería lucumí goddess Yemayá under the Catholic guise of Regla. Billini wrote his novel
inspired by the construction of Baní’s church of Nuestra Señora de Regla in 1882, for which he “encabezó la primera suscripción que se abrió en el pueblo con $500. Además hizo poner un tejar a inmediaciones del lugar de la fábrica para proveer de ladrillos vendiéndolos a un precio módico” (Baní y la novela de Billini 113). Despite his profitable sponsorship, he must have feared the Dark Madonna’s vindication of Blackness in the Caribbean, specifically because the Virgin of Regla was gaining some sort of political momentum in Cuba simultaneously with the decline of cabildos (Elizabeth Perez 212). As we will glimpse, Regla is still Black in the novel but her solar image is already part and parcel of mixed-race ontologies. In Baní o Engracia y Antoñita Regla is made to paradoxically obscure and delegitimize her Afro-Dominican sources, conceptually alienating the sun and logos from African diasporas.

Finally, I critique a paradisiacal reading of Baní in a literary tradition that goes back to José Joaquín Pérez and includes Hostos, Billini, and Gastón Deligne—all urban proto-tourists and enthusiastic explorers of the countryside’s medical geography. I follow Mark Anderson’s reminder that the construct of “paradise” is ecological “in that it embodies the conjunction of harmonious interrelations between humans and the environment, with an eye to optimal habitability” (211). This allows me to argue that Billini and others envisaged Baní as a metonym of the Dominican Republic. I conclude that Billini promoted the strategies that made Baní an optimal environment for the idle urban male subject to the prejudice of rural women’s precarious labour situation and historical memories of runaway slaves.

From today’s perspective similar turn-of-the-century stories and aesthetics appear as ruins and remains—destroyed dreams, distorted illusions, footprints that lead readers into the heart of once-heated debates and deeply felt causes. What is worth remembering, though, is that nowhere on the globe have humans achieved the kind of emancipation Caribbean intellectuals foresaw on the horizon, as coming. While Hostos and Francasci worked to bring decolonization and gender emancipation closer to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, Billini and García Godoy worried about their racial and class privileges and about the very novelty of political modernity. These writers attempted to decrease racial tensions and to offset struggles for Black equality and justice. They did not promote racist bigotry directly because they sought the alliance of Afro-Dominicans against Black Haitians. To counter religious affiliations of Afro-Dominicans with Haitians and Afro-Cubans, Billini and García Godoy negotiated to dispossess Afro-Dominicans of their cultural identities and to expropriate their
pharmacopeias. Although some parts of the world have improved in some respects, such as in regard to racial justice, in the Dominican Republic discrimination against Afro-Dominicans and Afro-Haitians continues to be a major issue as, if not more, it was in the late nineteenth century. On the other hand, the kind of decolonization Hostos theorized seems so unattainable in present-day Puerto Rico that it is usually dismissed as idealistic. Even though my dissertation distinguishes different types of emancipations, I do emphasize their many points of convergence and their dependence on one another. Nowadays, the fin-de-siècle political question as to what potent plants and substances can bring us closer to sovereignty and freedom seems to have been replaced with imaginary transports of our expanded consciousness alone.

Notes
1. Gelpí dates the consolidation of the national canon around Naturalism and La charca to as late as 1956 when Manrique Cabrera published the first Historia de la literatura puertorriqueña (16-17).
2. During his stay in Santiago in 1873, Hostos frequented Lastarria’s household where he fell in love with his daughter Carmela. Yet Hostos hastened to leave Chile intuitioning that his deber required an incessant dissociation from the letrado family bonds.
3. Herlinghaus locates “Ortiz’s most obvious concern” in “a kind of Latin American epistemic, ethnographic, and poetic protagonism in the global venture, in which ‘actors’ such as ‘tobacco’ and ‘sugar’ would stimulate and embellish the culture of the European and North American centers, thus restituting economic income and symbolic authority to the less privileged Caribbean world” (3).
4. Here Trigo builds on an insightful psychoanalytical deconstruction by Patricia Gherovici of a psychiatric diagnosis from the 1950s—the so-called Puerto Rican syndrome, an equivalent of hysteria burdened by racial and cultural overdeterminations.
5. I am referring to the following excerpt from “Plato’s Pharmacy”:

Of course, in order to define the poetry of imitation, one has to know what imitation in general is. This is where that most familiar of examples comes in: the origin of the bed. Elsewhere, we will be able to take the time to inquire about the necessity governing the choice of this example and about the switch in the text that makes us slide insensibly from the table to the bed. The already made bed. In any case, God is the true father of the bed, of the clinical eidos. The carpenter is its “Demiurge.” The painter, who is again called a zoographer, is neither its generator (phutourgos: author of the phusis—as truth—of the bed), nor its demiurge. Only its imitator. It is thus by three degrees that he is separated from the original truth, the phusis of the bed.
And hence, from the king. (138)
6. In the subsection “The Filial Inscription: Theuth, Hermes, Thoth, Nabû, Nebo” Derrida interpreted the meaning of the Platonic myth of Theuth, the god of writing, in the context of Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian mythologies. He focused on the tales of substitution in which Thoth is constantly put in place of the sun-god, Ammon-Ra, “supplanting him in his absence” (89). Furthermore, “As a messenger, Thoth is consequently also an interpreter, hermēneus. This is one, among numerous others, of the features of his resemblance with Hermes” (88). Additionally, the god of writing in Plato is “also a god of medicine. Of ‘medicine’ both a science and an occult drug. Of the remedy and the poison” (94).
7. Derrida analyzed the phantom of pharmakon in Plato’s Phaedrus.
8. For a spectacular array of dangerous women see “En la popa hay un cuerpo reclinado” and the short film Juan sin seso (1959), one of Marqués’ collaborations with DIVEDCO, División de Educación de la Comunidad.
9. García Godoy was of Cuban origin and since elites did not practice Afro-Caribbean religions, considering them superstitions, I suspect that he misattributed some elements of santería in Rufinito.
Chapter 1

The Restlessness of the Colonial in Eugenio María de Hostos

The Puerto Rican writer and intellectual Eugenio María de Hostos (1839-1903) has represented a figure of consensus in the discordant political and social Caribbean landscape. Most scholars—among them Antonio Pedreira, Juan Bosch, Antonio Caso, Manuel Maldonado-Denis, Roberto Gutiérrez Laboy, Carlos Rojas Osorio, and Rafael Aragunde—have privileged the elitist image of a *letrado*, that is, a didactic moralizer and a normal school educator, disregarding Hostos’ provocations and his theoretical interest in a broad milieu of cultural production.¹ Scholars of Hostos have repeatedly failed to address positive tensions that emerge from the allusions to narcotics in his writing. I contend that Hostos sought to mobilize Puerto Ricans, but—perhaps unexpectedly for himself—he discovered the discourse of liberation intoxicating. He attempted to check that intoxication by increasing his awareness of the writing process.

Hostos narco-analyzed the writing of political liberation and of the emancipated self. By exposing himself to the two “pharmaco-moments” of decolonization—the dialectic of mobilization and intoxication—Hostos initiated a transition from a “fighting literature” in Pedro Henríquez Ureña’s jargon (*Literary* 174) to the complexities of a therapeutic writing. While “fighting literature” sought to amend an exterior social reality, therapy through writing made colonial traumas cognitively and emotionally available to the writer and reader alike. Hostos proposed himself as a model liberator due to his readiness to transform in accordance with theoretical exigencies. Not surprisingly, the intoxicated liberator was at once less and more “organic”; less in the sense of intoxication as a chemically or discourse-manufactured and thus “unnatural” state of a human organism, and more in the sense of grounding the exalted liberator in his own corporality. Accordingly, Hostos recurred to the fields of chemistry and pharmacology to render the Romantic liberator metaphorically. By way of José Martí and others’ gradual assimilation of Hostos (Henríquez Ureña, *Literary* 163; Maldonado-Denis, “Martí y Hostos” 48-9), Hostos’ writing contributed to expediting modernity and literary *modernismo* in the Hispanic Caribbean. As such, it presents a considerable theoretical appeal to Hispanic humanities.

This chapter examines the articulation of Hostos’ intimate writing between political liberation of the colonized and dangers of overstimulation. I argue that Hostos’ divided consciousness is an inadequate place for consensus because any attained agreement on Hostos, meant to stabilize his
writing, undoes the pains of the ongoing unhappy work of dissociation specific to his style. I approach Hostos without assuaging his contradictions; I read the latter as the starting point of his thinking and his singular movement of emancipation. Hostos’ contradictions appeared in a series of pharmaco-metaphors that integrated organic life in speculative constructs: the “complete man,” saturated up to the point of intoxication; an intoxicated versus a sober liberator; and narcotic versus stimulating writing. In the attempt to bring fiction, humanities, social sciences, and other forms of knowledge closer to colonial realities, pharmaco-metaphors were symptomatic of an intense field of psychological and political liberation in Latin America in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Out of the Lettered City: The Pharmacology of Intoxication

First of all, we are not engaging in an archival enterprise: we are not concerned with the reconstitution of a past event whose only relation to us, to speak with Nietzsche, (who contributed, in this, to prolonging romanticism), would be that of a monumental or antiquarian history.

—Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy

The topic of intoxication as a side effect of ideology is grounded in Hostos’ biography. Repeatedly for sixteen years, Hostos explored on the pages of the Diary how the decision to dedicate his life to the liberation of the Antilles ruined his personal wellbeing. Hostos dreamed of a radical rupture since colonization, slavery, and the lettered city contoured experiences from which he wished to break free. However, we should tone down his radicalism because this rupture was strategic rather than real. A past whose markers had been colonization, slavery, and the walled, ordered city shaped Hostos. At no moment did he question a filial cult of his father—a hereditary royal scrivener and, at various moments of his life, a proprietor of slaves, a small coffee farm, and a pharmacy in the municipality of Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Hostos compromised, dissented, and quite literally departed from his Creole filiation, even at the risk of looking ridiculous. He abandoned his beloved patria, a career in law, financial stability, and his parental family in need. In Spain, Hostos disparaged connections in the liberal government. According to his own testimony, he turned down the informal offer of the post of deputy from Puerto Rico to the Constitutive Cortes in 1869 (1: 126; 2: 31). Neither did Hostos manage to keep his editorial and professorial positions for a long time. He parted with several women he loved. Last, but not least, Hostos dissented from all Puerto Rican and Cuban revolutionary exiles. Nonetheless, the rupture with his “circumstances” never quite translated on paper in a new positive sense of community as—in the most exemplary of letrado tradition—Hostos
remained suspicious of both the “uneducated masses” and the immature intellect of his students and allies.

Hostos seemed to think that the mediation of literary form would hinder his political project of liberation, and he felt compelled to “kill the artist within.” We interpret Hostos superficially if we read his persistent withdrawal, his “martyrdom” (Angel Rivera 54-60), exclusively as the readiness to sacrifice his life in war—in the Latin American scenario best embodied by Martí—and as his petty sacrifices of honour, food, proper housing, and clothing (2: 147-185). Hostos renounced his literary calling in view of theoretical exigencies. Intellectually, Hostos dated back to his formative years at the Central University of Madrid and to the Spanish liberal philosophy of Krausism. Hostos shared his university setting with Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Nicolás Salmerón, and Gumersindo de Azcárate, who were all disciples of the most vociferous exponent of Krausism, Julián Sanz del Río. For Gutiérrez Laboy, Hostos’ wary attitude toward imaginative, narcotic literature was comprehensible since Krausism generally opposed literature (37). Yet the difference between Giner’s rational criticism of the actual state of European literature in his Estudios de literatura y arte, for instance, was in every sense unlike Hostos’ painful, contorted, and ultimately doubtful breakdown from creative writing. The younger Hostos had strong ambitions directly and indirectly connected to literature, including but not limited to public recognition (“literary glory”) and an unconventional lifestyle. If and when Hostos renounced fiction—for his Diary indeed reads like a sequel to La peregrinación de Bayoán—it was because the Romantic novel was a stagnant genre while censorship and reading expectations in Spain and the Hispanic Caribbean made innovation difficult for the writer. Hostos aspired to coin a new language, increase awareness of the writing process, and produce an active response in the reader. He sought to breach the distance between writing and “reality” but also between writing and theory/“truth.” This project presented an impasse for Hostos because there was no educated literate public capable of sympathizing with his aesthetic innovations.6

To compensate for the lack of cultivated insubordination in his reader, Hostos turned to a “progressive” ideological propaganda in favour of the Puerto Rican and Cuban liberation, Antillean federation, Pan-Americanism, and gender, racial, class, and social justice, which all sought a series of political mobilizations in the region. Hostos’ insubordination itself was as indeterminate in character—novel or archaic—as any other element of his singular behaviour. On the one hand, Hostos’ haughtiness was aristocratic as evidenced in the fact that to restore his honour he challenged his
opponents to a duel several times. However, this must have looked outdated in mid-nineteenth-century Spain and Latin America as his challenges were never accepted. On the other hand, Hostos’ actions foreshadowed modern civil disobedience in his performative clashes with the Spanish police and French border patrol (2: 27-8). By the same token, Hostos rebelled against the colonial image of Puerto Rican conformism. The debasing myth of the “docile Puerto Rican” was still adopted uncritically in the nationalist 1930s by Antonio Pedreira’s Insularismo (21-36) and later by René Marqués. Unlike them, Hostos seemed immune to what he read as colonial and classed linguistic manipulation as early as the second half of the nineteenth century. Rhetoric stabilized Spanish domination by portraying Puerto Ricans through epithets such as “manso,” “sumiso,” and “dócil.” While the Puerto Rican public laughed along with the Spanish parodic sainete theatre and believed colonial propaganda (1: 91-92; 2: 131-134), Hostos neutralized the construct of docility and submission by analyzing the metropolitan import of the complex of colonial inferiority.

Above all, he manifested insolence in his vanguard style which used narcotic imagery to question a hypocritical colonial sense of decency. The rupture in this sense was definite. Even though Hostos did not dare to publish the Diary in which he effected this rupture during his lifetime, men and women of letters intuited Hostos’ sterile intention to scandalize (Pérez Galdós 102; Henríquez y Carvajal 76-77, 80-82; Henríquez Ureña, “Eugenio” 54). Yet, there was not enough refined public to shock. Hostos opted for oratio recta despite abhorring the side effects of populist propaganda: oversimplification for the sake of accessibility and ready-made answers for the sake of avoiding divergent interpretations. That decision might have ruined his personal writing career; at the same time his mobilizing propaganda became a foreign body (“injerto”) around which with time Hostos articulated the ethics of writing in the Hispanic Caribbean.

Hostos’ rejection of literature took different forms and significance across his work. His first novel, La peregrinación de Bayoán (1863), devalued the artist through a proliferation of agencies: of a reader, a critic, an editor, a typesetter, and a censor. Along with questioning the role of the author, Hostos distrusted Bayoán’s response to beauty. La peregrinación de Bayoán opposed the first-person narrator’s sense of beauty to historical memory. Every time Bayoán stood on the ship deck aesthetically enjoying the Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban coastline views and exaltedly praising Columbus’s deed, his gaze conjured up the phantasms of the exterminated Taíno (50, 54, 60-4, 69, 76). The historical scenes interrupted his disinterested contemplation, triggering both decolonizing and
psychological unrest. Hostos’ criticism of the transcendence of harmonious forms was both political and aesthetic; he attempted to produce a mobilizing discourse and a language that combined artistic beauty with the “truth.” The resulting aesthetic politically engaged such diverse elements as eroticism, ailing bodies, narcotics, economy, symbolic capital, and writing on the impossibility of writing in the colonies, which gave literature a modern flavour and heralded a new sensibility in Hispanic letters.

Predictably, the dialectic of art and politics did not resolve smoothly in a new synthesis yet. For Hostos, the opposites of creative writing and ideological propaganda constituted his true unstoppable agon. In a post-Hegelian manner, Hostos attempted to “sublate,” or reinvent the two extremes in a new type of writing, at once departing from and preserving the extremes. The theory of art mediated a new literary, early modernista style. Hostos proposed a therapeutic (“moral”) art to decolonize the psyche and arouse patriotism. However, his therapeutic writing seemed likely to reproduce the dichotomy of a knowledgeable doctor/moralist and a manipulated patient. In other words, the “revolutionary” rupture looked problematic from the political point of view because it meant Hostos’ refusal to engage with his audience genuinely rather than patronizingly stooping to their level. If this populist gesture did not expel Hostos from modern literature, it was because his intimate writing in the Diary meticulously registered his coming to terms with the ideology of liberation. At least since the 1860s Hostos became increasingly aware that the intoxicated liberator was he himself, feeling euphoric along with the people he mobilized. This awareness blurred any clear distinction between therapist and patient, signaling their mutual cancelling out.

My substitution in the last paragraph of the adjective therapeutic for “moral” in relation to art requires further clarification. Some contextualizing of Hostos’ vocabulary is necessary because nowadays we use moral in the sense of agreement with customary, standardized views on what is “right” and “wrong” in human behaviour. This was not what Hostos meant by moral. Gutiérrez Laboy equates “moral” with “regenerative” in that Latin American moral theory served as an avenue to mental emancipation of the people: “el pensamiento moral latinoamericano . . . tenía como objetivo la regeneración social y política de nuestros pueblos y combatir la educación escolástica que había imperado desde los mismos comienzos de la conquista y colonización” (52). The competition with the old scholastic educational models separated the meaning of moral in nineteenth-century Latin American social philosophy from the customary. However, I argue that it is not accurate either to call Hostos’ writing “regenerative.” The rubric of regeneration allows Gutiérrez Laboy to fit Hostos in
among other Latin American intellectuals of the time and to tacitly suggest that his writing resembled that of the turn-of-the-century Regenerationism in Spain. The discourse of regeneration, though, originated from metaphorical borrowings from the field of biology à la Buffon. Along with Johann Friedrich Blumenbach and Carl Friedrich Kielmeyer, Buffon studied the physiological ability to regrow lost or damaged tissues, organs, and limbs in structurally simple organisms (hydra) as well as in more highly organized genera (Holland 4-5). The imagery of social regeneration, as a result, was exclusive in terms of different groups and identities deemed responsible for the degeneration of the nation and even suggested them as disposable. Hostos, instead, admired the more traditional view of philosophy and asceticism as therapeutic and transformational. Writing propaganda against his true will, Hostos exaggerated the adverse aftereffect of his therapeutic, the noxious side of the Derridean/Platonic pharmakon. He thus remained in the metaphorical fields of chemistry and pharmacology. The added twist of complexity—how exactly does emancipatory politics operate on the bodily level?—accounts for Hostos’ singularity within the paradigm of the nineteenth-century Latin American moralists.

Before we continue, it is necessary to elaborate on why drugs and intoxication are such critical points of access to modernista aesthetics despite their episodic and elusive presence in Hostos as well as elsewhere in the Hispanic Caribbean literature. Regardless of their irregularity, narcotics signaled the denaturalization of discourse that had been preoccupied with engendering a living form of art. The concept of art as a living form emerged in modern metaphysics, reached its maximum intensity in Romanticism, and had to compete with alternative aesthetic concepts hereafter (Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy 34-7). If metaphysics had been discredited by the mid-nineteenth century, at the time of its emergence in opposition to scholasticism metaphysics was celebrated for its openness to live, changing, and related things. Metaphysics shifted the focus of inquiry from what had been regarded as independent and fixed essences of things to laws and relations among them. In aesthetics, organic art was supposed to be engendered and function as an organism; in literature this was achieved by means of the generic, structural, rhetorical, and metric organization. The ability to engender was an indicator of success in the Romantic genre of Latin American romance (Sommer 18). Instead, pharmaco-discourse functioned as an intrusive or even disruptive human design (theory), on the edge of organic life. In this broad context, broader than the specific configuration modernismo took in Rubén Darío’s work, there was no longer a best suited register and vocabulary to express the aesthetic object. The question of design and language came to the fore. Two-faced drugs combined organic and non-organic
aesthetic and complimented the literary imagery of dead nature, jewelry, and artifacts in Darío’s paradigm, both seeking to dismantle the self-generative nature of discourse.

Hostos wished to invent a new literary language as manifest in the second prologue to *La peregrinación de Bayoán* in which he remembered one “ilustrado y letrado” Spaniard being outraged because the book “[¡] debería estar escrito en indio! . . . con ese acento y con formas tan nuevas como las que usted emplea” (27). Hostos paralleled that criticism with the praise of an erotic scene between Bayoán and Marién by other critics that appreciated the “efectos nuevos” he achieved:

Llevaba la parte del libro en que Bayoán comienza a sostener la lucha de su amor con su deber. Estaba yo muy lejos de creer que la situación vulgar de que había tenido que valerme pudiera producir ningún efecto nuevo, cuando uno de los asistentes a la lectura, interrumpiéndome, exclamó:

—¡No siga usted! Déjeme saborear la emoción que me ha producido ese trozo.
—Pero si es una vulgaridad—observé yo.
—… Eso es el arte, enaltecer la vulgaridad hasta hacerla producir efectos nuevos.
—¡Eso es! … efectos nuevos. Yo nunca había sentido esta conmoción por pájaros, por flores y por besos.” (30)

In his *Diary* Hostos showed equal preoccupation over his language, although this particular time in a negative modality, lamenting the quality of his casual writing style (1: 144). Another example of language denaturalization is the fact that Hostos adopted much of the religious idiom in *La peregrinación de Bayoán*, allegedly familiar and dear to his reading public, while being extremely skeptical about Catholicism. In the second prologue, the censor blamed Hostos of blasphemy in an ironic tone: “y aquí habla usted de Dios… Pero, ¡demonio! ¡si esto es una blasfemia!” (34).

Now, what bits of Hostos’ chaotic corpus should we read to locate a provocative vanguard writer as opposed to the exalted preacher of freedom? Where do we situate his critical pharmaco-writing? Hostos’ attitude toward his own work was ambiguous. He called “articles” anything published in periodical press, without distinguishing between his proper journalistic chronicles and longer essays that treated topics of socio-political importance from a personal reflexive perspective (Gutiérrez Laboy 40). For him, the key lay in the material conditions of production: “articles” promoted the cause of Puerto Rican and Cuban liberation while providing for himself and his family. Hostos did not prioritize
any of the two rationales since he desired both collective and personal independence. However, at least in occasional moments of sobriety, Hostos grew suspicious of his propagandistic and didactic writing. Rafael Aragunde argues that Hostos used the concept of ideology in the sense of theoretical speculation, calling himself “ideólogo inofensivo” (Aragunde 13; Hostos 1: 252). Aragunde registers a margin to ideology in Hostos by showing that even Hostos’ most politically engaged work, like *Madre Isla*, theorized rather than indoctrinated his system of political concepts and ideals (12). Hostos realized that other leaders of liberation distrusted his persona due to his excess of propaganda (1: 204, 214). He prepared his major so-called treatises—*Tratado de moral*, *Lecciones de derecho constitucional*, *Tratado de lógica*, *Tratado de sociología*—as lecture notes. Published as teaching materials, all, except perhaps the *Tratado de moral*, offered little in the way of original thought. Hostos asserted in the prologue to *Moral social*, independent part of the *Tratado de moral*, that he decided to publish it only on the insistent request of his students (143-4). Certainly, this gesture points to evident vanity of the unrecognized genius; at the same time, it illustrates Hostos’ ambiguous attitude toward his writing. As another example, on the eve of his frustrated expedition to Cuba in 1875, Hostos catalogued all his unpublished work including translations of youth reference books, poorly composed in the original (2: 192, 208-14). At the same time, he did not promote *La peregrinación de Bayoán* before its launch to the Spanish book market (31, 35-43), nor rescued his second novel, *La tela de araña*, which after losing in a literary contest in Madrid in 1864 remained forgotten until it was rediscovered in the Royal Spanish Academy Library in 1991 (Álvarez, “Introducción” 21-26).

Therefore, ideology and pedagogy defined some of the genres Hostos practiced while the awareness of pharmaco-writing developed in others. Again, the divide was due to the *letrado*-type of skepticism toward his reader. When Hostos attempted to share his “true” thoughts and sentiments, he addressed the youth and “future generations” under the ecstatic hope of delayed communication (*La peregrinación* 18, 145). In more cynical moments, Hostos wrote exclusively for himself. This is why his public voice differed so much from the more intimate voice in his two novels, literary criticisms, some essays, travel chronicles, and the *Diary*. The latter group constitutes my primary research focus.

**Liberation Project: Toward Narcoanalysis**

In the Hispanic Caribbean canon Hostos stands next to a motley crew of liberators, patriots, writers, and intellectuals of the emerging nation states, raised to the rank of “founding fathers.” The
expression is placed in quotation marks due to the strong association with heroism, origin, and patriarchic foundation. Yet, this expression also pinpoints a compelling temporality; the mythical origin in the case of Latin American liberation during the nineteenth century collapsed into the present moment as history was being written before one’s eyes. This implied a tension between a desire for unity—a common sense of consensus—within the imagined community of newly-forming nation states and the proliferation of trial-and-error strategies that resisted any unity of sense. From this perspective, “founding fathers” turn out to be complotting sons who—although they fooled no one—disguised their uprising in Venezuela in 1810 as an excessive fidelity to the monarch following the Napoleonic invasion of Spain. Although people did not mobilize in Puerto Rico until the second half of the nineteenth century, a later canonization of Puerto Rican prominent figures similarly ignored abundant inner tensions within the canon. Paradoxically, the institution of literature since Pedreira prescribed as national sentiment on Hostos’ behalf what he had feared as patriotic exaltation.

This section of my chapter marks a transition from the haughty aesthete to the image of a “trembling” Hostos (Soto-Crespo 216). I discuss excesses of self-awareness during political emancipation and the resulting intoxication with “the proper.” What I call the proper here has been incorporated into the field of identity studies in Latin American criticism and conceptualized as “the authentic” and “the idiosyncratic.” To dialogue with this critical tradition from the material perspective, I pick up on Jean-Luc Nancy who theorizes the proper in relation to self-consciousness and re-appropriation. The polysemy of the proper—own, peculiar, excellent, correct, fit—emphasizes the materiality of all authenticity and idiosyncrasy by gesturing simultaneously toward property, peculiarity, and propriety. This subsection constitutes a complementary move to the previous one since intoxication no longer arises from an alien psychoactive substance (propaganda) but is revealed at the core of the national community building. Hostos advanced his pharmaco-poetics by registering that this inner intoxication bypassed his guards of rationality, will, and aristocratic contempt for a vulgar naivety. Intoxication laboured from within and dodged most sobering agents, which allowed Hostos to discover narco-analysis.

The process of liberation assumed emancipation in the legal sense of ex-mancipare (from mancipum/ownership, the latter derived from manus/hand + capere/take), of dispossession of a property that had been retained in one’s hands by force. In Roman law, legal emancipation referred to the “freeing of a son or wife from the legal authority (patria potestas) of the pater familias” (Online
Etymology Dictionary). Such emancipation was carried out by the more powerful legal authority of a judge. In the case of modern emancipation and specifically in the colonial setting, the meaning shifted as the agency passed from the colonial judge onto the colonized self. However, the elites and Creole citizens (mis)represented the colonized in Latin America and hence acquired the agency of setting free and the position of authority. In this way, emancipation included re-appropriation that, instead of doing away with a regime of social dependency, assigned a new and allegedly more proper proprietor. In short, active emancipation of setting free relied on the movement of re-appropriation in a double sense. On the one side, emancipation put forward an image of a freely acting moral self (Martínez-Vergne 50) and that of a collectivity in control of itself. On the other side, emancipation faced inner differentiation within the collective, which degraded into restructured relations of dependency.

Nancy examines this link between emancipation and appropriation when he conceptualizes sense-work in Hegel. In the Post-Enlightenment context when the otherworldly sense of Christianity was no longer available or trusted, the task of philosophy became to reflect on the ongoing production of sense. Since sense-work could not be based on any transcendent presuppositions—among them the unshakeable existence of the I—it relied on the self-production of the subject position. Nancy distinguishes between “true” versus “bad” (common-sense) appropriation. He claims that self-consciousness is acquired through the non-stop cycle of appropriation and re-appropriation of the outer reality and subject of sensing—their co-production:

. . . the proper is the position of a thing separated off as “its own,” and is therefore also the position of a thing separated off as an other’s own self, to the very extent that this other in itself is already its own. The proper, as such, is not a possession or a dependent of a given subject. The proper takes place as appropriation, which is to say, in the ‘union of [the person] with himself’ that characterizes ‘propriety’ in the juridical sense; and the proper is thus not a given, but a relation of coming to self. Nothing is properly proper without being incessantly reappropriated, taken and thrown back into this relation. (Hegel 47)

Following Nancy’s argument, truly decolonizing re-appropriation required making sense of oneself on the grounds of a concrete material situation of the colonized. Emancipation meant setting oneself free from the logic of different (mis)representations. Actual re-appropriation of the country included the gathering of scattered individuals, fragmented diverse communities, and diverging senses in a wider
formation of the nation state. In this sense, modern Latin American nations did not precede their emancipation but developed in the process. However, the movement of re-appropriation constituted their biggest challenge as it meant potentially repeating the route of colonization from within.

Yet the story of the new letrados was more pathetic than the Hegelian and Nancian terms account for because what started as a “true” decolonizing re-appropriation already included instances of “bad” appropriation. Overstimulation and saturation paralyzed the impulse of being thrown back into the redistribution cycle. The initial re-appropriation gave more content to the imagined collective and especially to those who represented it; and labouring on a concrete content slowed down the ongoing work of dissociation and emancipation. Although Puerto Rico did not gain independence at the time, the scepticism toward liberation was high among the discriminated groups due to the situation in other post-Independence nation states across the region. In the literary realm, intoxication accompanied most emancipatory narrative. On the one hand, there arose a surplus of rationalization necessary to succeed in a tiresome legal dispute within the new collectivity. On the other hand, the process of gradual dissociation and of setting oneself free produced euphoria incompatible with official courtroom and lecture hall settings. Thus we could interpret the Venezuelan Andrés Bello’s epic “Silva a la agricultura de la zona tórrida” as “el laboratorio biopolítico donde forjar el agente de una Modernidad cuy genealogía latina lo lleva a hundir sus presuntos orígenes en el mundo clásico” because the lyrical voice urges readers to leave the colonial city and the legacy of wars and conflicts and to regenerate themselves by means of labour in the countryside (Kaempfer 273). On the other hand, it is precisely the mythopoetic Dionysian call of libidinous nature that lures the poet away from the elites’ conventional setting. In this sense, the letrado jabber of rhyming and rhythmic words aligned nature, homeland, politics, love, and sexual arousal while suppressing immediate material relations.

Intoxication as an explicit topic in Hostos signaled increased reflexivity, but this awareness alone could not sober the liberator. This is worth remembering when examining Hostos’ style. For the sake of my argument, it is not a question of morality versus immunity. It is not that the letrados were essentially corrupt or, instead, that there were two categories of letrados: a common one versus some exceptional and redemptive cases. Hostos’ restlessness and disquiet were structural. Despite being hyperbolically insightful about the pitfalls of emancipation, Hostos was no less intoxicated in his views. Therefore, I analytically distinguish two types of intoxication in Hostos. Firstly, Hostos feared intoxication as a side effect of excessive, nerve-racking patriotism. Secondly, he realized that
intoxication was not induced but rather came from within as a by-product of emancipation and symbolic re-appropriation.

Now, what does it mean exactly to say that Hostos and the letrados in general were intoxicated even when not consuming psychoactive substances, right at the heart of their sobriety and positivism? According to Nancy, the Delphic maxim “know thyself” is aporetic; introspection inebriates Socrates to the point that he is incapable of getting drunk in a vulgar sense:

You will say that Socrates never gets drunk. He leaves in the morning without staggering, having drunk like none other. In truth, his intoxication precedes all others. It is immemorial. ‘Know yourself!’—here is the open abyss, the promised indistinction, the river without return … From laurels to hemlock and priestess to priestess, Socrates is by himself a Dionysian procession. He knows well that ‘yourself’ is the other and infinity. But neither in escape nor a divine God—not Deus absconditus—no, here and now, the same right at its most intense exhaustion. (Intoxication 7)

In the Symposium, Socrates’ singular present overflows him. Serious introspection does not leave any untouched outside. He is negatively/differentially saturated within the infinite separation and confusion of himself and the other: Aristodemus, Phaedrus, Agathon, Diotima, and Alcibiades. The moment Socrates makes the other his own other and thus appropriates love amid speeches on infinite—inappropiable—love, the other slips away and is substituted with another.

Having differentiated himself from all Puerto Rican and Cuban exiles during his first stay in New York in 1870, Hostos felt negatively/differentially saturated with himself. Instead of feeling lonely and abandoned on that New Year’s Eve as he in fact was, Hostos lamented the structural impossibility of absolute detachment and sobriety:

Es posible llegar a las más altas concepciones, complacerse en las eminencias más inaccesibles, prescindir de todos los vicios, desligarse de todas las pasiones sensuales y sustraerse en todo lo posible de las pasiones inocentes; es posible ser hombre completo, ser hombre, el hombre que yo deseo, el hombre que exige nuestra misma naturaleza, y no es posible, sin embargo, esquivar los mudos efectos que producen en nosotros las costumbres a que menos obediencia damos.

“Feliz año nuevo, Happy new year”, dos frases consagradas por el sentimiento que, en España,
me habían conmovido objetivamente, me han conmovido ayer, lo más íntima, lo más subjetivamente que pueden conmover. (1: 196)

Hostos glossed here that the self-conscious (“moral”) self can never control all intoxicating agents. Right within the self’s buried interiorities, the self’s fermentation inebriates him with his affinities, animosities, recollections, ideals, and projects. There was no reconciliation in Hostos. His restlessness of the colonial subject required a radical revision of history; according to Adriana Michéle Campos Johnson, “Bayoán’s eyes are riveted to the debris left behind by progress much like Benjamin’s Angel of History” (75).

Labour of (Pharmaco-)Dialectic

The contradictory nature of Hostos’ writing goes beyond the traditional philological approach that neutralizes difference as diachronic; that is, as successive periods that logically replace one another in the course of a writer’s life. Rather, Hostos’ contradictions co-exist under the same book cover and inform the progression of his writing. Their occurrence in the same or several contiguous paragraphs, as well as their accurate orchestration by Hostos, do away with the question of whether the contradictions were deliberate. According to Rojas Osorio, the author of the introductory chapter to the Tratado de moral (1999 edition), Hostos’ philosophy was concrete and “of content” (55-56), and, I argue, its content was more exploratory than prescriptive. In his exploration, Hostos followed the easy-identifiable pattern; he brought together seemingly incompatible propositions to test their incompatibility and overcome binary thinking.

Hostos proceeded by taking an initial concept that he would end up displacing and destabilizing seriously. This meant situating himself within the logic of the proposition under examination. To illustrate this as his prevailing writing strategy, I chose an example from “Hamlet” (1873), his most acclaimed piece of literary criticism, in which Hostos explicitly opposed “relation of harmony” to “relation of contrast.” The destabilization of the concept of harmony is crucial to my argument since this concept has served as the promptest route to Hostos’ identification with Krausism and positivism, as well as being at the centre of debates around Hispanic philosophy of the second half of the nineteenth century. “Hamlet” starts with what looks like an explicit predilection for harmony over contrast:
En la relación de armonía, la naturaleza tiene un nombre, el de Creador; una personificación, la tenebrosamente luminosa de Dios; la sociedad tiene una forma, la fraternidad; un representante, la augusta humanidad; el ser interior tiene una esencia, el espíritu; una apariencia, la majestuosa del hombre original. En relación de contraste, la naturaleza, la sociedad, el ser, están vacíos: ni Dios, ni humanidad, ni hombre. (Obra literaria selecta 288)

There are various things, however, going on in this paragraph. God as such is not denied but is incorporated in a synonymic series of nature (real thing)—Creator (name)—God (representation). Here God acts as a sublime personification of immanent harmony; representation that contains both bright and dark colours (“tenebrosamente luminosa”). Harmonious society, on the other hand, is represented by the whole of humanity; that is, a plurality of forms and commonalities not exclusive of one another. A harmonious “inner being” is that entering human history for the first time: the in-itself of spirit, a majestic appearance, and the “original man.” In other words, harmony appears as a beautiful but outdated attribute of the original unity while the actual world of Hamlet is that of separation and inner differentiation—of relations of “contrast,” in which God, humanity, and man are words that acquire some unstable meaning only in opposition to their other. Hamlet’s “moral revolution” has the structure of an explorative journey, a realization that there is no more a given transcendent sense of God, family, and community. Rather, sense is to be made by human agency through encounter and differentiation:

“El sondeo de este abismo, lo desconocido que se alberga en sus entrañas, la luz o las tinieblas que se sacan de él, la necesidad de internarse en lo más hondo para subir a lo más áspero y llegar desde la sima hasta la cima, desde oscuridad hasta la luz, eso es lo que constituye una revolución moral” (288). In this passage, Hostos anticipated the oxymoronic negative affirmation of Baudelaire’s toast speech: “Verse-nous ton poison pour qu’il nous réconforte! / Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau, / Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer ou Ciel, qu’importe? / Au fond de l’Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!” (335) Although it appears that for Hostos, unlike for a more cynical Baudelaire (“Enfer ou Ciel, qu’importe?”), where the journey would take him did matter—his is an ascending movement from dark to light and from a chasm to a summit—the end point becomes irrelevant. Its irrelevance is expressed through phonetic equivalence (“simá”—“cima”), the harshness of light, and the resolution of Hamlet’s moral revolution in tragedy. The parallel with Baudelaire holds because both Hostos’ and Baudelaire’s standpoints in front of an abyss are distinctly post-Romantic. Unlike the Romantics, neither was enchanted by the “bad” infinity of the unknown. They proposed to go deep into the depths
of the infinite for the sake of knowledge/experience, took the risk, and plummeted into the downward journey. They did so because theirs was a mediated world in which sense no longer existed on its own but had to be brought into existence. The pursuit of sense (“truth”) in this connotation (in opposition to a mimetic sense) had a specific resonance in the context of decolonization; it provided Hostos with a horizon for a radical personal and social transformation.

Similar rhetorical structures—when Hostos articulates his enunciation between two antagonistic propositions—characterize his style best. They abound across most genres in Hostos: from La peregrinación de Bayoán, to the Diary, to the Tratado de moral. The example from “Hamlet”, though, stands out due to its redundancy when the form of a contradiction echoes the content on harmony and inner differentiation.

Given the recurrence of the juxtaposed antagonistic structures in Hostos, it is surprising that most critics have been unwilling to pay attention to the complex texture of his writing. Rojas Osorio cites the above example from “Hamlet” to resolve Hostos’ operative dialectic into an appeasing assertion that “Una personalidad lograda en el mejor sentido es, para Hostos, aquella que ha logrado una perfecta armonía en todas las facultades de su ser” (66). In the same chapter, Rojas Osorio repeats the conciliatory gesture when defining what must have constituted the concept of happiness for Hostos (52). Even though Rojas Osorio attempts to present the audience with an updated reading of Hostos, he confesses that he restrains himself to “sus [las de Hostos] fórmulas más felices” and adds that “no todas lo son” (56). Rojas Osorio argues against what he interprets as Antonio Caso’s claim of excessive determinism in Hostos. For Rojas Osorio, Hostos did not perceive physical, psychological, and social laws as normative, a “straightjacket” (Aragunde 25); but rather as a given, one’s circumstances. Then, in a Stoic fashion, the individual was to embrace the circumstances to achieve his full potential (59-60, 66). That would be a gracious explanation if it did not proceed from the suspicious removal of the less “felicitous” formulas. Otherwise, Rojas Osorio interprets Hostos as a well-balanced, dispassionate, and ahistorical Stoic, not interested in transforming his circumstances in the first place.19

There is this uncanny moment when, having been lulled by some positive reassuring argument about Hostos, the reader realizes that the writer lends himself to the exact opposite debate. His critics attribute this effect to his historical and geopolitical limitations, claiming that Hostos ignored his contradictions.20 Although they praise Hostos as a prominent nineteenth-century Latin American
intellectual, it is as if his writing exhausted itself, leaving the modern reader with little worth of thinking about actively. I disagree with this position. To read Hostos anew, though, it is important to depart from his firm inscription in the Krausist and positivist traditions. Hostos embodied and articulated a complex Caribbean dialectic of *arraigo* (uprootedness) and errantry, belonging and melancholy, political engagement and serious theoretical introspection. He accomplished an unprecedented corpus of self-referential writing in nineteenth-century Latin America (Mora 21). His writing reflected on the discourse production and functioning in social and political realms. Again, Hostos’ singular dialectic went almost unnoticed because, among other reasons, it did not fit in the Krauso-positivist model.

At this point, I must take a slight detour on dialectic and Krauso-positivism to position Hostos in relation to both. In my understanding of dialectic, I draw on Nancy’s reading of Hegel:

> In the history of philosophy, the “dialectic” has always been the name of diverse ways of making sense—of making the *logos* play or work—there where no first or last signification is given. For Plato, Aristotle, or Kant (granted considerable differences), this condition was restrictive, or negative. Hegel makes of it the very condition of truth: that it not be a given. (The Restlessness of the Negative 53)

Writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution, Hegel realized that “truth” should not be fixed, neither in nor beyond the thing; it does not belong to the identity of the thing, nor floats above it in the realm of the transcendent but always reveals itself to itself as an “incessant movement and activity” of sense-making (Nancy, Hegel 50). The preposition “to” here signifies an encounter, a positionality in front of oneself as well as analytical distancing from oneself and anthropocentric worlds disguised as the “whole.” By anthropocentric worlds I mean the confusion of the inside and contours of a collectivity with the whole.\(^{21}\) Challenging the cheap masquerade of a “bad” whole does not imply depreciation of knowledge. Rather it suggests that, by definition, we cannot trust any knowledge sustained by common sense because it is inevitably partial, incomplete, and biased; instead, we should take the reverse of the common into account. Therefore, I do not read the Hegelian type of dialectic as a progressive linear movement that, by resolving a contradiction articulated between dialectic extremes by the operation of *Aufhebung*, ends up suppressing initial oppositions in a new unity. As Nancy points, the German word *Aufhebung* (translated as “sublation,” upheaval) designates “both the action of
suppression, or making cease (which is the usual sense), and that of gathering or retaining” (Hegel 51). Thus, dialectic does not presuppose something like conceptual mestizaje in which only a “‘reasonable’ middle ground” survives (Hegel 50). Dialectic makes sense only if it opens a space for active thinking between conjoined dialectic opposites and foregrounds the fact that the opposites are historical (we could add, cultural, racialized, classed, or gendered). Not to fixate this antagonism, the analytical isolation of dialectic extremes should never be left at rest but immediately put to labour.

Again, I do not contend that Hostos was an enthusiast of Hegel. When he mentioned Hegel, he did so to explain that what he proposed—more in accord with contemporary positivist philosophers such as Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Émile Littré, and others—differed from what Hegel did. In addition, the few scattered direct references to Hegel date to a later period in Hostos’ career, posterior to La peregrinación de Bayoán and most of his Diary. Thus, I do not pursue direct Hegelian influences in Hostos. Yet, Hegel defined the intellectual climate in Europe in which Hostos developed his critical method. The lack of translations of major philosophical works into Spanish and Hostos’ incomplete university education contributed to the fragmentary character of his thinking (1: 223-24). However, for Hostos, education surpassed passive accumulation and inventory of the available knowledge. He developed a passion for reading, which grew into a feverish chaotic activity. Hostos, as a learning subject, actively co-produced the operative knowledge—subsisting as if in the air—adapting it to suit his ideas.

The conflict between the post-Hegelian dialectic and positivism grew bitter as Hostos moved to the Americas, attempted to settle down in the Dominican Republic and Chile, and struggled to advance the humanities and social sciences. To do so, he had to keep up to date with contemporary theory, experimental sciences, and mainstream philosophers. Yet, if followed closely, Hostos’ agreement with the positivists was precarious. According to Caso, Hostos yielded “a las inspiraciones concomitantes de las corrientes filosóficas contemporáneas, experiencialistas y positivistas” (36). Gonzalo Capellán de Miguel explains that, at the time, there existed “una identificación amplia y vaga entre positivismo y otra serie de corrientes de pensamiento relacionadas con el auge de las ciencias naturales durante todo el siglo pasado, como el evolucionismo, el neokantismo, etc. y que dotaron al ambiente finisecular de un aroma cientificista general” (228). According to Capellán de Miguel, scientific advances in the second half of the nineteenth century triggered this “aroma cientificista general”, which outdid the doctrinal positivism of Comte. Although Latin American positivism embraced a range of doctrines
beyond Comte, a critical automatism considers positivism to be incompatible with German idealism. In this context, Capellán de Miguel’s study demonstrates how more peripheral philosophical traditions relied on both. In Spain following the Sexenio Democrático (1868-1874), idealist Krausism, for example, co-existed with positivism and meant a liberal openness to the most recent European trends.

Although Hostos went to the Central University of Madrid in the late 1850s and was a student of Sanz del Río, scholars have never agreed whether and to what extent Hostos assimilated Krausism. Salvador Giner’s moderate opinion prevailed for decades that “la huella del krausismo [en Hostos] es casi imperceptible en lo que toca a la causa remota de esa ideología: la filosofía de Krause” (qtd. in Maldonado-Denis xx). On the other hand, Salvador Giner and Maldonado-Denis argued that Hostos could not help associating Krausism with the effervescent liberal ambient created by Sanz del Río and Hostos’ co-disciples Francisco Giner, Salmerón, and Azcárate. The same atmosphere reigned at the Athenaeum of Madrid which Hostos frequented. This Madrid experience defined the repercussions of Krausism throughout Hostos’ intellectual project: “hay en su intenso moralismo laico, en su búsqueda de la sobriedad y en su fe en la educación algo eminentemente krausista que nos lo hermana a las figuras de aquel movimiento” (Salvador Giner qtd. in Maldonado-Denis xx). Whereas a detailed analysis of Krausist philosophy is beyond the scope of my argument, it is remarkable that the abovementioned characteristics of Krausism—intense secular moralism, sobriety, and faith in education—are based on the idea of positive, achievable by those means individual and social harmony. Social harmony, consensus, and reconciliation were key preoccupations for the Krausist movement, according to Juan López-Morillas, Elías Díaz, Antonio Jiménez García, and recently Capellán de Miguel:

Krause iba a rechazar desde un primer momento todo tipo de radicalismo en cualquiera de las dimensiones de la vida. De hecho, la suya es una filosofía de la armonía que tiene como principal objetivo superar los exclusivismos doctrinales pasados y presentes. La dialéctica de Krause (y aquí puede residir uno de los principales motivos de su éxito entre los sectores liberales progresistas y moderados de nuestro país), a diferencia de la de Hegel (de lucha), es de conciliación, de armonización de la realidad: los opuestos no son sino la variedad que deberá finalmente unificarse, en una unidad integradora que, antes que eliminarlas, conserva las diferencias. (Capellán de Miguel 224-5)
While Krausism preserved the differences, it preserved them unaltered in their identity by a dialectical journey of *Aufhebung*. This constituted a political moment of Spanish Krausism; there was no possible agenda either for a colonial status of Cuba and Puerto Rico, or for a structural transformation of the colonized psyche through education. I suspect that as early as on the threshold of the Glorious Revolution in 1868, Hostos intuited this neglect in his letter to Sanz del Río: “para expresarle los afectos de mi alma, le estrecharía la mano; para expresarle mi juicio, sonreiría; pero no hablaría con la boca una palabra” (4: 12-3). For the young Hostos who sought decolonization, Krausism proved to be unsatisfactory and insufficient. In the years to follow, Krausism surfaced in Hostos’ writing as one of the “ideas fuerza” (idées-forces) that he embraced and resisted simultaneously. From this perspective, the above aspects of Hostos’ thinking that Salvador Giner attributed to Krausism lose their positive character and become hub points of arguments and counter-arguments, attraction and departure—the accumulation of contradictions. On a different note, Salvador Giner placed sobriety in between moralism and education, as if intuiting—after Hostos—that secular faith, deposited in moralism and education, concealed the risk of intoxication. I return to the dialectic of intoxication and sobriety in Hostos in the last section of this chapter.

Another philosophical reading that reached the closest on the pharmaco-dialectic in Hostos was by the Mexican philosopher Antonio Caso.25 Caso studied Hostos alongside Spinoza, Hegel, and Hippolyte Taine because they all believed that “la esencia del mundo es racional, es decir, adecuada a la constitución de la mente humana” (36). However, Caso discarded a strict parallelism between Hostos and Hegel because the latter required an update in the second half of the nineteenth century when Hostos was writing. The traditional Hegelian dialectic had not yet realized the after-effects of rational saturation and overstimulation, of the intoxication produced in the organic body by the incessant frantic play of logos. It had not yet become Hostos’ pharmaco-dialectic. Caso’s talk delivered at the Mexican Youth Athenaeum in 1910 resists quick interpretation since it duplicated its object of study, Hostos’ philosophy, by means of a comparable dialectic itinerary and the degree of exaltation. The basic difference between the two was the status of their dialectic; Caso’s was legitimized by the group of like-minded intellectuals. That is, despite being public and selling a moralizing and nationalist agenda to the audience, Caso’s talk sounded esoteric and required a theoretically trained mind to labour over its micro-movements against the dominant rhetoric. This constituted the political risk of dialectic. Hostos’ strategy was to dodge this risk by exploring pharmaco-dialectic in a more private and
theoretical registers while adopting a therapeutic public voice. Caso, instead, preached in favour of the vigorous Latin American nation (“raza”) (29). From the start, Caso dissociated morality from Christian piety and set the Nietzschean philosophical framework of dominance, energy, vitality, and joy. At the same time, he appropriated Nietzsche’s framework via stoicism and the Spanish origin of Seneca.

Next, Caso argued that Hostos was a moralist in a similar sense to Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: “Como Zaratustra, Hostos cree en la victoria mística de los ejércitos de Ahura-Mazda sobre la caterva impía de Anro-Manyus, y espera firmemente que el ideal optimista de hoy sea la realidad insuperable de mañana” (35). Disregarding for the moment what Caso meant by this, he intended the comparison as a compliment. The Mexican Youth Athenaeum proposed Nietzsche as an authoritative means to overcome a firm alliance between positivism and the Mexican regime of Porfirio Díaz. José Vasconcelos even affirmed in his talk on Gabino Barreda that same year that positivism had taken deep roots in Mexico, and Latin America in general, precisely because there had been no Spanish translations of Nietzsche. For Vasconcelos, positivism was a form of philosophical compromise for those who felt terrified of the moral responsibility of confronting the Hegelian type of “sistemas que quizá omiten nociones fundamentales” (97). Here Vasconcelos too referred to the responsibility of making sense in the absence of transcendent certainties, such as the death of God in Nietzsche. For him, that task was being accomplished only by the Athenaeum generation, guided by the credo of Zarathustra: “Amigos míos, es indigno de mi enseñanza quien acata servilmente una doctrina; soy un libertador de corazones; mi razón no es vuestra razón; aprended de mí el vuelo de águila” (97). Unlike Vasconcelos, Caso claimed that there was a nineteenth-century Latin American Zarathustra—Hostos. He dared return to the big metaphysical systems of the past (e.g. the moral system) and attempted to make a new sense of morality. Hostos’ understanding that logos—if set free in motion—loses its way, its dynamic equilibrium, and is intoxicated by the extremes, brought him closer to Nietzsche than to Hegel. That is why Hostos’ optimism was tragic because it foresaw the unbecoming, overflowing, and dispersal of the self labouring over sense.

**Slavery in the Workings of Pharmaco-Dialectic**

There is no modern dialectic yet without some figures of Master and Slave since no sense escapes economic relations in secular modernity totally. Envisioning the simplified scenario in which Hegel, followed by Marx, advocated for the Slave while Nietzsche retched at the excess of rhetoric,
What effect did Hostos’ first-hand experience with slavery have on his pharmaco-dialectic? Although physical proximity did not guarantee theoretical awareness, Hostos looked around to make sense, and his writing deconstructed the disfigured trope of Slave to reach self-awareness. In La peregrinación de Bayoán, the slave-based economy concealed violence and unhappiness behind the representational beauty of Marién (Rosa 78-91). Next, Hostos had to unblock the rigid identities of Master and Slave. Because slavery legitimized liberation, Hostos frequently described symbolic slavery as a condition common to all Puerto Rico. Yet his most intimate memories interrupted the free play of pharmaco-dialectic. Neither La peregrinación de Bayoán nor the Diary did prove enough to shed light on Bayoán and Hostos’ neurotic distress, their urge to write, and their radical distrust of representation. Before embarking on a failed military expedition to Cuba in 1874 in which Hostos feared he might die, he composed a memoir of his childhood experiences meant to justify his life.

The memoir connected slavery with petty physical abuses, sexual harassment, traditional schooling, Christian morality, and—not without some irony—capitalism and disease. By that time there existed a well-established, albeit censored, paradigm of abolitionist literature in the Hispanic Caribbean. Instead, Hostos’ memoir showed the banality of slavery. In his account, there were neither grandiose plantation settings nor libidinous masters. His villain was a spoiled child; his guilt was being born into a household whose very architecture relied on slavery.

Hostos intuited that the “whole” of pharmaco-dialectic functioned as a depository of bad conscience and mechanics of repression, meanwhile patriotic sentiment disguised economic relations of exploitation. At this point, he caught his pharmaco-writing red-handed. Hostos began the memoir with the customary parallel between colonialism and slavery: “En el sistema colonial de España, la esclavitud tiene tantas formas cuantas necesidades la vida colectiva. Nada puede hacerse bajo él porque para todo es necesario acudir a la autoridad” (1: 10). The metaphor of slavery accumulated the excess of injustice and legitimizixed liberation in the name of the slaves, exonerating slave owners and their descendants from guilt. Decolonization felt more intense if the Creole imagined a common ground with the literally unfree populations. However, by repeatedly using the metaphor, Hostos realized the compulsive impulse to intensify the ecstasy of liberation and registered the other side, the history of abuse.
In New York, Hostos realized that the regime of colonial dependence benefited his father and contributed to his relative prosperity. According to the memoir, in the town of Mayagüez people had to petition the colonial authorities for a permit to rebuild their households after a devastating fire. To do so, they contracted a bureaucratic intermediary between them and the colonial power—Hostos’s father, “instintivamente poseedor de la forma literaria y conocedor del formulario abogadil que se emplea en esa clase de documentos” (1: 11). Sheer familiarity with legal jargon was not enough in the colonial setting; it was necessary to know how to “escribir y expresar en formas agradables” what one wished (1: 11). Metaphoric slavery consisted in the destabilization of Mayagüez inhabitants’ social position as proprietors and the structural humiliation they endured by asking nicely, and as if for a favour, for the right to rebuild their town using their own resources. Here “literary form” meant an elusive mode of expression. On the one hand, it was an ornamental veil without which the petitions would have been taken for political demands. On the other hand, Hostos understood that his writing was also a literary form which disguised the existent material relations by misusing the trope of slavery. Thus, the close pursuit of rhetorical figuration promised to surprise social injustice.

In the memoir, slavery stood for colonialism not only due to the fantasized structural resemblance. The Slave and the Creole occupied each other’s place in a series of seesaw metonymic movements. The impersonal metaphor of “colonialism = slavery” gave place to the recollection of the domestic “negros”. The trope juxtaposed to its literal equivalent exhibited spatial contiguity, proper of metonymy (Laclau 62). In other words, the substitution of names—slavery for colonialism—was due to the physical proximity of slaves and Creoles in contrast to the remoteness of the metropolis. The juxtaposition prompted a metonymic contagion in both directions. Hostos’ younger brother, Adolfito, had the same name as the slave Adolfo; the latter was ambiguously described as “alto, delgado, de facciones regulares, de aspecto singular entre humilde y altanero” (1: 15). Despite Adolfo’s regular appearance, Hostos affirmed Adolfo’s singularity through a play of difference between compliance and dignity. Like Hostos’ father, Adolfo was “by instinct a possessor of the literary form.” Unable to write, Adolfo carried out the differential property of writing upon his own personality; his arrogance was ambivalent. On the one hand, it looked like a desirable feature in a domestic servant; his for-show self-importance increased the elegance of the haciendado’s home life. On the other hand, this arrogance signaled a sense of self-worth and hence inner emancipation.
The next memory of the laundress Josefa disturbed a subtle play of differences and demarcations between the Slave and the Creole. Hostos remembered his sadistic pleasure of pricking Josefa’s arms with a pin: “Recuerda a la lavandera Josefa por cuyos brazos tenía predilección, pues más de una vez tuvo la bárbara complacencia de hincar en ellos un alfiler” (1: 15). Juan Bosch was the first among Hostos’ biographers not to pass over the episode in silence: “Rapaz sumamente violento, Hostos fue una naturaleza briosa desde sus primeros años. Se gozaba en clavar alfileres en los brazos de la lavandera o en pellizcar a una acogida de sus padres. ¿Muestras de vehemencia? Quizá. Lo era mucho: la primera vez que oyó música estuvo dos días acostado en el piso y girando como un trompo, sufriendo porque no recordaba el aire” (3). Here Bosch blamed the child’s cruelty on the “exceptional nature.” Hostos the child was not accountable for abuse because the vehement infant was not self-aware yet, immersed in and carried away by the sheer sensation of pleasure. If there be a reason behind his behaviour, it was the same nature that made the child live his first aesthetic experience as separation and pain of non-mastery when he reflected and inflicted the pain on himself.32 Instead, I argue that Hostos approached the episode as the perversion of nature, facilitated by the state of exception a master child was granted.

He analyzed the structure of the narratives of capital accumulation and family slaves. “Fotografiando mi pensamiento,” said Hostos in 1866 about his writing procedure (1: 36). Photographic imagery indicated a radical shift in his epistemological sensibility. Earlier, in La peregrinación de Bayoán, Hostos had been obsessed with the Enlightenment motif of light penetrating the dark and illuminating the hidden essence of things.33 He sought to overcome the binary opposition of dark and light thereafter. Although from the very beginning Hostos practiced the first-person narration, it took him a while to learn to plunge into intimacy without withholding his words. The Diary was obscure at first because of numerous euphemisms and ciphers, especially when the younger Hostos touched on topics like money, women, and honour. Instead, the memoir, like an imagery machine, aspired to register his memories fully. The childhood setting provided Hostos with a temporal distance of someone looking through the family album. This allowed Hostos to dissociate himself from the child whose experience was that of the inherited world. The memoir exposed not the “fierce” exceptional child but the exemplary impunity of the Caribbean elites who permitted the abuse in the first place.
The memoir rescues Hostos’ aestheticism together with the conceptual and emotional disquiet proper of pharmaco-dialectic. It proves that Hostos followed the socially accepted virtues not because of his (and Bayoán’s) excessive hypocritical scrupulousness. Was not Marién’s virginity, elevated and preserved even post-marriage, meant to reflect an absurd value in the false mirror (La peregrinación de Bayoán 28-29)? The word virgin used to describe Marién must have sounded vulgar to Hostos since it suggested the organic corruptibility of a female body. At least he never dared describe as virgin any woman he connected to. Hostos praised women’s sexual responsiveness à la Rousseau as an indicator of spiritual liberty (2: 266-68). When Hostos refused to have sex with a French prostitute during his stay in Paris in 1868, he did not posit himself morally above her. He sheltered the prostitute in his room; yet, he did not ask for what he thought would be a logical compensation. The neurotic topos of postponed sexual satisfaction functioned as a nerve centre in the Diary. Aware of the social impunity of his position, Hostos attempted to balance impunity with morality, which meant the exaltation of individualistic redemption. This is why a balanced moral system became such an urge later in life when Hostos conceived his Tratado de moral. Neither in the Diary, memoir, nor in La peregrinación de Bayoán was there a sense of law that could prevent dehumanizing abuses of slaves and women—dehumanizing for both sides. Hence, Hostos opted for becoming his own law-giver, police, and supreme judge. The neurotic response indicated the withdrawal of responsibility onto himself. This resulted in isolation, shuttering himself off from intimate contacts with the world, an infinite interior errantry of sorts.

**Chloroform, Morphine, Caffeine, Maxims**

...el frasco de cloroformo es representación de un intensísimo dolor de muelas. Sin los tres reales lo hubiera sufrido: teniéndolos ¿por qué no? La partida excesiva, la que por ser irracional me descontenta, es la del café. Café significa enervación, melancolía, abatimiento: ¿por qué voy a él, lo tomo, me disgusto y me privo de la satisfacción del ahorro?

—Eugenio María de Hostos

The memoir included two more key episodes besides Hostos’ recollection of the household economy: the child’s illness followed by a protracted convalescence in the countryside and his first direct contact with writing. These episodes functioned as mirror image with respect to the rest of the Diary, adding missing pieces that shed light on Hostos’ project of dissociation from capital via addiction and colonial institutions via writing. The memoir connected capital accumulation to addiction
and colonial apparatus to writing, while the body of the *Diary* showed how alternative addiction to coffee and alternative psychoactive writing brought down the colonial edifice from within the psyche.

The *Diary* laid out an intricate route of withdrawal. Willing to quit pharmaco-literature—“mi libro es un narcótico,” reads the second prologue to *La peregrinación de Bayoán*—Hostos attempted to profit from addiction, not for nothing he lived on the debris of Romanticism. By 1874 Hostos had recognized that addiction evaded his pursuit and he wished to give up. To overcome the illusory mastery, he went back in time to question how his addiction started. In the memoir, the child had refused treatment by instinct—“el brebaje repugnante” (1: 16)—until his mother corrupted him. She paid her son some coins every time he took medicine. Yet the protracted recovery proved the medicine did not do much good. The child was fascinated by the transmutation of a drug into money through his ailing body: “cuando la convalecencia le consintió dar algunos pasos, más se ocupaba de tener segura la bolsa en que había acumulado su riqueza, que de afirmar sus pasos” (1: 16). The body became the site of drug trafficking, and his mother was a drug dealer. It was the only time, though, when Hostos possessed the spectral capital. To accumulate capital meant to join in the Creole *letrado* drug market and to take over the communications network after his parents. The drugs were “bad”: his sisters Lola and Engracia suffered recurrent domestic abuse, and one after another all Hostos’ siblings died young. The only survivors were himself and his bachelor sister Rosa. But not to join in was not a simple matter of choice since Hostos was unfree, always already the addict. He probed the other marginalized side of a drug culture represented by caffeine, flânerie, poverty, apathy, and melancholy, but switched to stimulants eventually.

In 1866 Hostos found himself unemployed and anesthetised, with the residues of his family capital being squandered on insignificant daily expenses in the metropolitan capital city. Hostos started his *Diary* on drugs in the double sense of “about” and “under the influence” of diverse chemical substances. His Madrid experience was hallucinatory and “without truth” (Derrida “The Rhetoric” 236). When he incorporated the table of his daily expenses in his October 1st, 1866 entry, a vial of chloroform figured on the very top:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Un frasco de cloroformo</td>
<td>Rs. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A la lavandera</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En sellos</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hostos admitted that he wasted his money (1: 34); yet the habit was strong, and the prescribed medicine was his indispensable expenditure. He displaced the guilt of excess onto a few cups of coffee: “el frasco de cloroformo es representación de un intensísimo dolor de muelas. Sin los tres reales lo hubiera sufrido: teniéndolos ¿por qué no? La partida excesiva, la que por ser irracional me descontenta, es la del café. Café significa enervación, melancolía, abatimiento: ¿por qué voy a él, lo tomo, me privo de la satisfacción del ahorro?” (1: 35). His pain seemed to be authentic, while a painkiller seemed to be a simulacrum; yet the authentic and the simulacrum mixed up in a body, and the difference blurred. The newly synthesized drug promised the suffering body a technology of deluding pain. However, to maintain the modern subject’s claim to sovereignty, psychological and chemical dependency on chloroform was transferred onto an otherwise rather innocent Caribbean psychotropic. The tables that Hostos left here and there unincorporated into the texture of the Diary registered that the negative balance was due to the pharmaceuticals and the “cuentas galanas:” 3 reales on chloroform, 6 on morphine hydrochloride, 5 on asafoetida, 6 on palm olive, plus unspecified amounts on doctor’s visits, to the laundress, innkeeper, and a café owner.

Yet the figure of a “bad” drug (coffee) misrepresented and diverted the economy of the addict. Although Hostos’ financial difficulties caused him overwhelming distress, it was not until Hostos met the Chilean Villarroel in 1874 that he contemplated the apparently easy solution of buying food from a store (2: 148-9). For now, a residue of his family’s social status and official medicine co-produced his body, and the withdrawal from narco-narratives looked anything but easy. He wished narco-analysis because the situation was getting out of control. Yet there was no treatment available other than trial-and-error experiments and introspection. It had never been easy to make sense of drugs, and Hostos proceeded by substituting one type of writing (dream-like, hallucinatory fiction) by another (a diary of narco-analysis). He withdrew his writing from public judgement to the darkness of the night and the solitude of impersonal and transient hotel rooms.

To conduct his experiments and observations, Hostos isolated some categories. Since nineteenth-century pharmacopoeia did not separate beneficial from addictive drug effects, Hostos mimicked a chemist and attempted to make sense of drugs through an improvised classification. He
distinguished between what I call analgesic/anaesthetic, “enervating,” and “stimulating” effects (1: 38).

It was no coincidence that Hostos never named the effect that he fought the most. He was hooked the strongest on anaesthesia; therefore, the latter grew disproportionate, sublime, and avoided being addressed by name. Chloroform and morphine counted as analgesic/anaesthetic since they relieved pain. Hostos erroneously described caffeine as enervating, that is, debilitating and exhaustive. Yet, he was not that wrong in the end. Even though caffeine is a stimulant at the moment of intake, today’s science shows that all stimulants bring adrenal exhaustion in the long run. Hostos used coffee to get through the day and not to write, so by the time he sat at the desk at night, he registered being burnt out. To incite Hostos against coffee, there was also a tenuous link between enervation and female neurosis. The twelfth edition of the DRAE (1884) featured a pejorative cultural connotation of the word used in the second half of the nineteenth century as a synonym of effeminacy, debilitation of a masculine strength of sorts. The promise lay in stimuli that suggested the increase in sexual desire together with the literal meaning of a goad and a piercing pain. But how did writing map on Hostos’ pharmacological chart?

The Spanish metropolis plunged Hostos in anaesthesia by numbing his pains and senses: literally, with chloroform, morphine hydrochloride, and asafoetida; figuratively, due to lack of recognition and scarcity of means of subsistence. For Nancy—faithful this time to the traditional European framework which until recently has denied drugs to the marginalized and periphery against all empirical evidence,—basic needs constrain the body and block it from outpouring, characteristic of ecstasy. The poor or colonized body is contained within its own limits so that it can move more easily in the outer world seeking to satisfy its wants: “Doesn’t the body leak out when it no longer has to deal with some necessity? When it floods, overflowing its own tide?” (“Intoxication” 42) By the same token, though, the needy body feels the pressures of restriction all the more and is easily lured by the fraudulent narcotic “promise of exteriority” (Ronell 50, 60-1). When the self sets out on a narcotic trip, he rather explores his own intricate system of “fractal interiorities” (Ronell 15).

Drugs end up intoxicating the self with himself. Well-educated, with a global view, and a mission, Hostos met many prominent Spaniards at the Central University, Athenaeum of Madrid, and other venues. He reassured his aesthetic and intellectual superiority through communication with them. This initiated what Nancy calls “intoxication of showing oneself and of seeing oneself showing
oneself” (“Intoxication” 49). The supposed incompatibility of Hostos’ two agendas—to liberate Puerto Rico and Cuba, and to establish his household—undermined his psychic resilience.

He surrendered to anaesthesia for a moment, but coffee did not. I might overread Hostos slightly since there are no direct indications on this matter in the *Diary*; nonetheless, it is hard to dissociate coffee in nineteenth-century Spain from the Caribbean. The back and forth movement the coffee caused between stimulation and enervation undid the work of numbing, gave rise to psychogenic pain, and plunged Hostos in his Caribbean dreams as well as self-diagnosed apathy and melancholy (1: 45). In this way, and yet bypassing his awareness, pharmaco-writing already flowed freely on the pages of the *Diary*.

Hostos’ attitude toward writing was ambiguous due to the dilemma between inheritance and dissociation/decolonization. He sought to come to terms with writing in the memoir. The fourth, and last, episode reveals the negative side of the colonial order. Hostos the child suffered injustice backed by colonial social institutions when he first went to school and encountered writing in its technical, calligraphic aspect: “La escritura sirvió al niño para tener la revelación de la justicia. Deseo a todos los niños de la tierra una tarde igual a aquella en que Eugenio María, completamente satisfecho de una plana que había hecho con el mayor esmero, recibió en premio una reconvención violenta y un castigo” (1: 19). Already here, at the very initial stage, strict surveillance and censorship controlled writing. Earlier, Hostos had accessed colonial writing in the ornamental guise of the “literary form” which dressed up the right to rebuild one’s property as a petition and the slave’s resistance to domination as compliance. Now writing exposed justice at the moment of its absence, to the child who had experienced injustice as its perpetrator and hence did not have a full grasp of it. The institutions of family and religion endorsed the pedagogical injustice toward the child. Hostos’ mother discarded his “quejas más acerbas, protestas más viriles, acentos de más activa indignación” (1: 20) since she feared the “germen de un espíritu vengativo” (1: 20). The alliance between school, church, and family pedagogy overcame the protective instinct of a parent. This incident broke Hostos’ close family filiation and signalled the birth of his consciousness. Self-awareness came at the cost of separation from the mother, Creole spiritual inheritance, and produced the danger of establishing wrong alliances, such as the one the child developed with some Domingo Prats (1: 21).
Yet because the birth of consciousness happened in and through language—by separation from the language which is not entirely one’s own and, subsequently, its re-appropriation—the experience was prelinguistic and rendered any intelligible testimony of the event impossible: “Es deplorable que no se haya conservado puntualmente la memoria de aquel día. El estallido del sentimiento de justicia en un alma es un momento augusto cuyo recuerdo minucioso sería tan útil para seguir el desenvolvimiento de un alma nueva cuanto para la historia del desarrollo de las pasiones y las ideas en el alma humana” (1: 20). Writing became the only means to approach—without ever reaching—the “truth.” Likewise, La peregrinación de Bayoán sought the literary idiom suitable to transcribe the birth of consciousness.35 The narration exhausted the same story over and over again but proved unable to articulate the sense of Bayoán’s restlessness.

The perils that Hostos associated with writing—the piercing, pinprick pain of injustice—assuaged for the moment in Madrid amidst medically induced indifference.36 His classification of drug effects might look naïve from the standpoint of modern pharmacology; Hostos believed a few cups of coffee to exhaust one’s nervous system yet regarded chloroform to be an innocent pain killer. Leaving aside the pharmaca distribution on his classifying chart—are’nt the pharmacodynamics of chloroform and coffee reversible in terms of the effects?—the fact remains that Hostos turned to writing for an antidote (a remedy for a remedy) to counteract chloroform anaesthesia. Anaesthesia caused a decrease in sensation and bodily response, meanwhile Hostos pursued intense becoming and transformation of himself and the Caribbean. This is why sensory stimulation—often reaching the degree of a psychogenic pain—looked preferable: “¿Para quién es como para mí, cuestión de vida o muerte, de ser o no ser, la de hacer una patria política, social, intelectual, moral, de la que geográficamente debo a la naturaleza?” (1: 133).

Hostos’ interest in the emerging field of psychology (Álvarez) still did not mean that he sought to harmonize his and others’ psychic condition or heal his apathy and melancholy.37 Hostos knew that liberation required huge psychic resources that exceeded natural capacities of a well-trained and disciplined psyche like his own, not to mention the psyche of “uneducated masses” that required stimulation to keep up with their day-to-day subsistence: “¿Por qué han de dejar de fumar los que fuman, beber los que beben abusivamente, de jugar los que juegan, de amar sin pudor los que así aman, espíritus sin educación en su mayor parte, cuando los espíritus cuidadosa, victoriosamente dirigidos, se encuentran mal después de una abstención convencional, circunstancial, forzada o voluntaria, de esos
pequeños placeres que convidan a vivir” (1: 130). Here Hostos synchronized himself with the masses by proposing the outrageous synonymic series of tobacco, alcohol intoxication, gambling, love affairs, and caffeine. By 1866, following the largely unnoticed publication of *La peregrinación de Bayoán*, Hostos became disillusioned of writing; in the meantime, he needed writing to raise his self-awareness, re-appropriate the colonized psyche, and promote the Caribbean cause in Spain. Although he considered the will and “fuerza moral” essential to the enterprise (1: 22), because of the spiritual colonization, there was not enough concentration of will either in him or in his compatriots to carry out the liberation (e.g. 1: 197). To arouse the will required a sort of subterfuge—stimulant writing.

By the way of disclaimer, not until his return to Latin America did Hostos seriously contemplate altering the consciousness of others again, after the failure of *La peregrinación de Bayoán*. He eventually preferred to do so through direct pedagogy rather than fiction-writing to control the repercussions of his teaching better. He attempted to ensure that the discourse of liberation and emancipation did not produce the stasis of intoxication. For now, Hostos conducted a pharmaco-experiment, having chosen himself as an exceptionally abnegated individual, minimally resistant to psychogenic pain, and ready to simultaneously surrender his life and augment his will by means of exterior stimuli.

Hostos resorted to writing when emotionally drained and unable to concentrate. He registered the excesses of “imaginación inquieta” that desired “grandeza incitante” and yet deteriorated into “días vacíos de reflexión, llenos de deseos confusos, de vahídos cerebrales, de torpes excitaciones de la fantasía” (1:26). Writing provided Hostos with a routine around which to organize his life, which thrust him out of stupor. The process of putting words on paper side by side and the production of sense through their inner differentiation promised the excitement of non-stop vertiginous labour of pharmaco-dialectic and the resulting increase in psychic energy. Yet Hostos noticed that writing also enervated and exhausted the nervous system. The question then arose of how to distil writing: to remove enervating properties and make a medicinal stimulant out of it.

*Stimulus* and its derivatives are some of the most recurrent terms in the Diary, used around 80 times (around 60 in vol. 1). The entry of October 2nd, 1866 is dedicated exclusively to stimuli. Although the meaning of *stimulus* in the Diary is unstable and depends on the immediate context, the following definition stands out for it immediately preceded Hostos’ ten maxims:
Hostos discovered the connection between stimuli and memory/oblivion since to retrieve information required stimuli that triggered memory. However, he did not pursue the narrative madeleine and the reversible reaction. Quite to the contrary. Like a chemist, Hostos rearranged the “natural” bonds (association of ideas-writing-stimulus-memory) by extracting one element (stimulus) out of the aggregate. He sought the disjuncture between the imagination of the doer and the stimulant. Not the record of people, objects, and events meaningful in the context of one’s singular life but maxims that affected any reader. Stimuli were detached from their concrete ground and fabricated for delayed consumption (“precisamente para tenerlas siempre delante de los ojos exteriores las escribí”).

Stimuli disconnected from all accidents of free association, specific to the imagination from which they originated. Hostos considered imagination to be enervating because it required constant labour of dismantling and assembling various elements together anew. Instead through pharmaco-writing, enervation of the author transmuted into accumulated vigour. As one reads his actual stimuli, though, it seems as if writing did not bring in anything essential, neither adding to nor altering the categorical meaning of the sentences: “Lo infinitamente pequeño es lo infinitamente grande;” “Si aceptas el mundo, tienes obligación de ser hombre de mundo.—La madre de ese hombre es la voluntad;” or “Elige entre tu voluntad y una pistola”.38 Hostos’ stimuli, I argue, differed from traditional maxims since the former did not record any ready-made sense but rather sought to elicit a physiological, or “organic” response in the reader by boosting his will power. Stimuli inverted the meaning of reading from incorporating the truth delivered by the author to gaining access to his conceptual grid and consuming psychoactive passages together.

The Pilgrimage of Bayoán

. . . mi libro es un narcótico: aquel hombre dormía profundamente . . . lo siento por el libro: ya no lo publico: tal vez se dormiría la humanidad y las generaciones venideras me culparían de su sueño.

—Eugenio María de Hostos
Hostos first published *La peregrinación de Bayoán* in Madrid in 1863 and republished it in Santiago de Chile ten years later. To reserve the analysis of his first novel for the end might look like an odd research decision but I had two main reasons for it. Firstly, the text is complex and to approach it from the top, before having elaborated the theoretical apparatus akin to Hostos’s aesthetic, would require the space of the whole chapter. Secondly and most important, *La peregrinación de Bayoán* allows me to wrap up my argument. The novel emphasizes the issue around narco-ethics and discursive stimulants, which takes me back to the concept of experiment in Hostos. Because the *Diary* was intimate, and therefore jeopardized only his private well-being, Hostos cared less. In contrast, *La peregrinación de Bayoán* was meant to spread the negative dialectic among the wide public and cause the irreversible chain reaction (decolonization). Hostos hesitated because of the possible human price of decolonization. Indispensable for decolonization, the pharmaco-dialectic in the novel leads to the lamentable death of Marién.

This section proceeds in four moves. I begin by examining how the text politicizes the body. Next, I identify the negative dialectic as Bayoán’s ability to disintegrate on the levels of narration and story. Then, this disintegration prompts stalling and deviation rather than a progressive movement of regeneration. The pharmaco-dialectic is expressed through the resistance of materiality (Columbus and Bayoán’s deliria and Marién’s disease). Last, I study the scene at the end of the book in which Bayoán defines narco-writing.

Hostos wrote his first psychoactive narrative by the age of 24. In *La peregrinación de Bayoán* he articulated for the first time what would become the pivot of his thinking: the uncanny intrusion of the body—high, ailing, medicated—amidst the grandiose discourse of emancipation and patriotism. Three years later in his *Diary*, Hostos directly associated *La peregrinación de Bayoán* with the emancipation project. He did so in a rather weird idiomatic manner that brought politics down to earth and to the ailing body of the political subject:

Un temor que me liga, fruto tal vez del desarreglo de mi espíritu, el temor de que sigan cansándose mis ojos, me impide analizar hoy, como deseo, lo que hay de permanente y utilizable en mí, y averiguar por deducción si hay desacuerdo entre mi ideal y mis fuerzas, si éstas son débiles para llegar a aquél; si estoy descaminado; si debo, desligándome de errores y prejuicios, volver a mi punto de partida. Pero pese al temor, y con la venia de la oftalmía que
vislumbro, puedo decir honradamente lo que busco para poder mañana decirme lo que puedo hacer. Hasta 1863 quería gloria, y nació La Peregrinación de Bayoán. Aquella era la fábula de una volición latente, y la crisis que produjo empezó a elaborarse: quise patria, y como medio, aspiré a la política; submedio de este fin secundario fue el desenvolvimiento intelectual, y luchando contra mi inverosímil indolencia, intenté dar toda su fuerza a la razón. (26)

Hostos registered a passage from fiction writing to political action. The novel spurred out of a personal crisis (Diario 226; The Pilgrimage 18; Bosch 12-3), but instead of resolving the crisis, writing the book plunged the unquiet psyche into yet deeper crisis. Fiction augmented and distorted—intensified—the contradictions that it revealed in the structure of reality. It created the desire for an alternative reality, “patria”. By no means was “patria” a given in Hostos’s case. Although stemming from the word pater, the patria differed from one’s circumstances. In yet other words, “patria” signified dissociation from the naturalized bond with Spain, linguistically stabilized in the expression of “madre patria”. The dissociation meant to be carried out through intellectual activity and political intervention. Now, why in between Hostos and the liberation of Puerto Rico did there appear the “disorder of his spirit,” ophthalmia, and what Hostos himself called his “unplausible indolence”?

The ailments signalled the pharmaco-moment in the dialectic of liberation. On the one side, personal aspirations (literary fame) gave way to the political agenda. On the other side, the labour of dissociation fatigued and consumed energy. Mental and bodily health appeared inversely proportional to the work of emancipation. Desire for the patria—at once stimulating and enervating upsurge of love—led to psychic disequilibrium. The political subject of emancipation feared for his spiritual and bodily integrity.40 Hostos was unable to keep up with the labour of dissociation because it required the amounts of energy that exhausted his body which, in turn, succumbed to a disease. In Hostos “voluntad” and “volición” belonged in the domain of politico-philosophical idealism. Hostos warned against the excesses of idealistic revolutionary thinking and struggled to ground political idealism in the human body through the intricate Montesquieu-like system of checks and balances (will, heart, reason, “conciencia,” etc.). He laid this down as his project as early as La peregrinación de Bayoán. However, Hostos did not predict that by carving space for the living body amongst pure political ideals, he would politicize the human body and make it into the site of modern politics.
The literary genre of *La peregrinación de Bayoán* doubles asymmetrically as a pseudo-romance and a politico-philosophical novel, the romance being framed within the politico-philosophical argument. The psychic restlessness which sets the Boricua Bayoán forth on an intercontinental journey reflects, in turn, in the narrative form which vacillates and structurally replicates the protagonist’s pilgrimage. Criticism has not paid enough attention to the novel’s conceptual collage which glues together four loosely connected scenarios. The text opens with two prologues and a key which place the intradiegetic narrator (Bayoán) within the narrated story (his diary). The second sequence comprises the inauguration of Bayoán’s pilgrimage when he seeks to empty out his spirit of all content but fails once and again as his vessel sails around the Caribbean instead of advancing to Europe. The course of his journey deviates from the route laid on the map. Bayoán stalls in the sea while his gaze floats along the irregularities of the shoreline. In his periplo, he records unchronicled collective memories of the conquest until the fear of death inundates him and makes him tremble to the core. The trembling marks the onset of the third and biggest book portion as Bayoán accepts his humanity (“Yo soy un hombre” 74), steps down from the epic register, and goes inland on a social visit to his friend’s friend, Guarionex. There he immediately falls in love with Guarionex’s beautiful daughter Marién. Guarionex has an indigenous name but he is a slave-owning hacendado. This hints at the uneasy conquest history when Spanish colonizers recognized some Taíno under the condition the latter fought the rebellious runaway slaves of African descent. Confronted with incompatible logics, Bayoán disintegrates into opposing faculties and embarks on relentless internal explorations while he and his fiancé cross the Atlantic. Bayoán’s writing becomes hallucinatory. His diary reaches the climax when Bayoán penetrates Marién’s dream.

Once the engaged couple arrives in Spain (245), the narrative focus shifts again. The fourth part centers on the question of writing. Bayoán feels ecstatic to publish his diary in Madrid (“¡Gloria, justicia, verdad, yo llegaré a vosotras…!”) (250) when the first-person narration is suddenly interrupted, and the next sentence reads: “El generoso joven no llegó (251). The book editor Hostos takes up while Bayoán’s writing is literally identified as narcotic (252-3). Separated from and longing for her home hacienda, Marién dies virgin despite being married to Bayoán. Bayoán faces the double failure of his literal as well as symbolic (phallic) writing and resumes his pilgrimage. He heads off to the continental Latin America, at which point the narrative frame closes and the reader is brought back to the beginning of the story.
La peregrinación de Bayoán begins with a double proleptic withdrawal of the literary object—a book. The first movement of prolepsis takes place in the “Prologue to the First Edition.” Before readers get lost in the baffling psychic and textual density of the book, they are warned that what they will read might not be a book at all, at least not in the sense of a meaningful text. Rather than meaning, writing generates a desire, an intention, and a thirst: “Este libro, más que un libro, es un deseo; más que un deseo, una intención; más que una intención es sed” (15). The prologue serves as a supplement and a foreign body that creates interior plies and layers through the dialectic play of differences. There is no radical withdrawal in the first prologue yet as the text promises gratification to those who peregrinate alongside Bayoán while negating the book to the sedentary non-reader. On the one hand, the first prologue promotes active readers by reassuring that they will find no ready-made “truth” in the book. Instead, readers themselves are responsible for making sense. On the other hand, the text offers psychotropic stimulation to readers: “Los que buscan en la vida algo más que una dicha deleznable, estimulados por el libro seguirán buscando” (15). Since the searcher will find nothing valuable in the quest but will irretrievably lose the brittle happiness within his grasp, the narration requires some psychotropic non-substance to engage the reader. As the love story of Bayoán and Marién advances, so does the realization that the restless movement of pharmaco-dialectic, articulated in-between decolonization, emancipation, and modernization, is to blame in Marién’s death.

The “Prologue to the Second Edition” (added in 1873) takes the prolepsis one step further backward by introducing the metadiegetic narrator of the third order (after Bayoán and the editor). This narrator relates the history that precedes the story; the history that needs to terminate for the work of art to begin: “Terminada la historia, empieza el libro.” (43) The second prologue insists that the discourse has no essence of its own. Rather, it relies on a double lie (one belonging to the order of the history while the other, to the order of the story). From the start, the book appears in its absence when, on his return to Spain, Hostos lies to his mentor-critic Rada y Delgado that he wrote a book. Encouraged by his friend’s enthusiasm, Hostos rushes to the next room, grabs a pen, ink, and paper and writes six diary entries. What he calls his “book” materializes in half an hour: “—Pero y ¿el libro?—insistió [Rada y Delgado.]—Ahí está?—¿En esas cuantas hojas de papel?—En ellas” (21). The writer immediately admits his cheat to the critic because he sees none in fact. He believes naively that the book exists prior to writing when he claims that he just finished the book in his head. It is not until Hostos starts writing routinely that he realizes the writing process is much more ambiguous than he had imagined (32).
The second prologue discloses the tricks of the profession whose ups and downs are comparable to the irregularity of navigation: “—¿Y desde cuándo tanta prisa? Después de seis meses de calma…/—Es que ahora vamos al vapor” (32). This prologue presents as an accidental/disconnected fragment the symbolically-charged mise-en-abyme episode in which Bayoán meets his mirror-image: the exiled and moneyless elderly revolutionary who dies and bequeaths his diary to Bayoán on board of the ship sailing to Europe. One day the typesetter comes for the “originales” to find out that Hostos ran out of new pages (32). To keep the typographic machine running, the typesetter demands a random manuscript he sees on the desk, Hostos’ “apuntes de viaje” (32). Even though La peregrinación de Bayoán insists on distinguishing between the sublime pilgrimage and an idle journey (32, 54), the typesetter doubts: “¿Y no es lo mismo? Lo mismo da andar de Ceca en Meca, a pie y con bordón, que de Cádiz a La Habana en vapor y sin bordón: todo es viajar” (32). Moreover, the American revolutionary’s prototype turns out “un catalán cualquiera … un hombre que no se había cuidado de la patria” (33). On the level of the story, the text warns readers that Bayoán’s writing is narcotic and therefore unreliable because it might distort the “truth” (I will return to this point further).

Allegorically, Bayoán stands for the erosive dialectic. His intent to revisit the colonial history of the Caribbean (October 12-November 26) turns Bayoán onto himself. He analyzes conflicting components of his not so own self in the third part of the novel, one of the most exemplary instances being the March 28 entry when Bayoán finds himself to be torn apart. His body functions as the mere envelope for the multiple disputing faculties: sensibility, reason, “consciencia” (the Spanish word means both consciousness and conscience), spirit, and heart. Yet, this disintegration and unrest provide for his closest unity with Marién as he penetrates her desires, dreams, and appropriates of her voice. Paradoxically, though, this unity is the unity of separation, which Marién does not survive.

Narration faces a similar disintegration. The passage from one to another part of the book does not occur smoothly in terms of the linguistic idiom, specific to each part. The enunciations express the signified inadequately and are endangered by silence. The proliferation of ellipses indicates the withdrawal of language; the syntax is over-punctuated by abundant suspension points, paratactic colons, commas, exclamation and question marks: “Y… / Los puntos suspensivos, son suspiros” (76). The passage from one part to another confirms the abandonment of the previous idiom until at the end the language returns to the point of departure. The inability to speak up one’s mind coherently translates into the failure of the project of emancipation that each idiom specifically was supposed to
accomplish. The pilgrimage starts on October 12 in the intent to retrace Columbus’ journey of
discovery backward. The story moves within the realm of the historical injustice against the Taíno and
the Afro-descendants. Once Bayoán meets Marién, the writing migrates from the historical into the
intimate domain. All that is left of Columbus are remnants of some sort of his intuited internal conflict.
Bayoán-Columbus seek to make sense and discover the scientific and philosophical “truth.” At the
same time they vacillate as Bayoán becomes aware of his personal immoral drives (arrogance, glory,
sexual desire) and foresees the truth’s fatal consequences: the destruction of the indigenous world and
the death of Marién.

Asela Rodríguez de Laguna places La peregrinación de Bayoán in the context of the
nineteenth-century Spanish and North American literature about Cristopher Columbus and the
European conquest and colonization of the Americas: Washington Irving, James Fennimore Cooper,
Ginés de Moscoge, Pablo Alonso de Avecilla, Luis Mariano de Larra y Wetoret, the Duke of Rivas,
Ramón de Campoamor, Angel Lasso, Ventura García-Escobar, and Narciso Campillo (745). She
studies the divergences between Rada y Delgado’s Cristóbal Colón: drama histórico en tres actos y en
verso (1862), likely familiar to Hostos, and Bayoán’s “inverse journey” that seeks to undo the route of
colonization (747). Rada y Delgado’s drama is dedicated to the Queen Isabel II and describes the
intrigues of the courtiers among other obstacles Columbus encountered prior to his voyage. The drama
praises the unity of God, the legitimate royal court, and the Spanish people on whose behalf Columbus
conquered the new land. It claims that the discovery “cerró el periodo de la edad media, abriendo a la
civilización cristiana un nuevo mundo” (Rada y Delgado 6). In contrast, “la novela de Hostos se
instaura como un texto contestatario a esos Colones románticos que solo aquilataron primero, las
vicisitudes anteriores al viaje y, en segundo lugar, el triunfo” (Rodríguez de Laguna 747-8).

Besides the imperial language proper to Rada y Delgado’s Columbus, there was, I argue, one
more crucial difference between the two texts. Rada y Delgado’s triumphant conqueror was a rational
man while Hostos’s Columbus was exalted by “truth” to the point his voyage had the structure of a
narcotic dream:

¿De dónde salen esas islas? / De donde salieron para el loco inmortal que probó que los sueños
son verdad. / Allí está Guanahani. / Con la misma ansiedad con que Colón la esperaba, yo la
espero: la veo aparecer, y la bendigo. Ella fue lo que premió al genio: ella fue la que le dio
aquella alegría misteriosa, que probada por un hombre, hubiera sido muerte, que probada por el
genio, fue su vida . . . ella fue el oasis tranquilo en donde descansó de sus fatigas aquel sublime
peregrino, cansado del desierto: ella fue el mundo de que ya dudaban . . . / El buque se abriga
con la isla, y bordea, mientras que yo busco la huella del coloso: busco en vano. ¿Por qué no
hay una estela que la marque? Todo, todo se borra. (136)

The plasticity and fluidity of the landscape (“¿De dónde salen esas islas?”, “El buque se abriga con la
isla”, “Todo, todo se borra”) craft the oneiric space. While the dose of the “mysterious happiness”
Columbus “tried”/“tasted” would be fatal for an average person, for the genius the anticipation of
discovery took over his life and substituted for the reality. Similarly, at some point Bayoán’s “inverse
journey” abandons the issue of the massacred indigenous populations and brings him within his
desiring, suffering, and dreaming self.

Despite causing delusions, the narco-logic paradoxically did grasp some sense of modernity.
Besides greed and mundane glory (exploration of the trade routes), in Hostos’s account, Columbus was
driven to the Americas by his desire to make sense and discover the scientific “truth.” However,
Columbus had been deceived by the promise of truth: “En Ornofay señalaron a Colón la comarca …
Colón oyó Mangón, se acordó de los cosmógrafos, se dijo Manguí, pensó en el gran Khan: quiso unir
hilos dispersos, una de las maravillas del talento, y por unir demasiado, los rompió” (67).

The urge to make sense brought about destruction. Writing accompanied the discovery
(relaciones and letters of Columbus) because modern writing became the vehicle of making sense and
history. The diary genre is important, therefore, because Bayoán attempts to rewrite history by writing
on top of Columbus/Bartolomé de las Casas’s diary (the so called Diario de a bordo):

Y escriben la historia a su placer, y dicen: / Nosotros, ingleses, civilizamos a la India; nosotros,
españoles, llevamos el progreso al Nuevo Mundo; nosotros, romanos, impulsamos a la
humanidad a su perfeccionamiento. / Y hay en esta impostura de la historia una verdad
aterradora, porque mientras que Inglaterra y España y Roma antigua encadenan y martirizan y
aniquilan al mundo de Roma, al Nuevo y al más viejo, la humanidad progresa, el comercio se
explaya, la industria rompe sus esposas, las artes se lanzan a su espacio, las ciencias utilizan
hasta el rayo, la inteligencia engrandece a la materia. / Y hay luz, y sin embargo, hay sombras: y
en todas partes, y en lo grande y lo pequeño, ven los ojos claridad que los incita, el espíritu ve oscuridad que lo rechaza. (75)

The material prosperity and progress appear inseparable from the history written by the Europeans atop the ruins. Those histories “incite” and deceive the eyes (“impostura de la historia”) with bright luring pictures. The hegemonic logic exalts matter, which is why there is no access to any beyond to modernity except via the retrograde “espíritu”.

The decolonizing preoccupations deepen as Bayoán arrives in Europe and is denied the right to disembark in Cadiz (“la ciudad del año doce”), which indicates that it is impossible to undo the route of colonization. The voice of Bayoán loses all authority in Madrid. The language switches from Bayoán’s first-person narration to the third-person narration of the editor. The editor increasingly appropriates the diary: by commenting on it first (e.g. 251) and by replacing Bayoán’s diary with his own in the end (317-9).

Before subsiding once and for all, Bayoán’s voice conjures up a bizarre scene in which he wonders whether his writing is a narcotic drug. Bayoán addresses the editor: “Te he leído algo de ese libro que tantas vigilias, que tan largas meditaciones me ha costado, y que por el extraño anhelo de una gloria, no he dado a luz todavía; tú sabes si ese libro, que sólo tú has leído, puede servir de narcótico…” (145). At the beginning of the paragraph, the pharmaco-writing property is stimulating, which is why the book literally produces insomnia (“que tantas vigilias … me ha costado”) as well as physic disquiet in Bayoán. The question whether this kind of writing is a narcotic drug seems to be rhetorical—obviously “no”—since in Spanish the meaning of the word narcotic is closer to the Greek etymology and refers to the soporifics. As the paragraph continues, though, Bayoán remembers his visit to one Spaniard. This marks the climax of the politico-philosophical part of the book and is worth reproducing in its entirety:

Pues bien; resuelto a publicarlo, porque es un grito de mi alma que ya no quiero contener, fui a leérselo a un hombre que a pesar de su nombre merecido, me inspiraba más confianza por su corazón, que esperaba fuera eco del mío. Me presento en su casa tembloroso, y con palabras trémulas y una sonrisa forzada, le digo: Vengo a cumplir mi palabra, le traigo a usted el libro: cuento con sus consejos. Aunque me inquietó un movimiento de desagrado mal oculto, me aconsejé la paciencia, abrí mi manuscrito, y empecé a leer. Como sé que la soledad del
pensamiento y su larga incubación, producen siempre algo nuevo, no me extrañó el asombro que vi en su semblante; pero me dio confianza, y leí mejor, con más seguridad, con entusiasmo. Arrastrado por él, leí y leí, olvidándome de todo, hasta el extremo de no pensar en nada. Acababa de leer un apóstrofe… aquel apóstrofe que tú calificaste de violento. Está en él tan vivamente repetida la indignación de mi alma, que a pesar de mi modestia o de mi orgullo, quise pedir su parecer a mi oyente… ¡No me oía!: mi libro es un narcótico: aquel hombre dormía profundamente… lo siento por el libro: ya no lo publico: tal vez se dormiría la humanidad y las generaciones venideras me culparían de su sueño. (145)

The two-sided pharmaco-writing shows its reverse. Bayoán trembles, and his words quiver as the reading drags him away (“Arrastrado … leí y leí, olvidándome de todo, hasta el extremo de no pensar en nada”). Yet what causes insomnia and unrest in the Spanish-American, functions as a sleeping pill to the European ears. Here the text still operates within the decolonizing framework. Bayoán’s story was meant to shake off the colonial stupor and stimulate active response in the reader by *reductio ad absurdum* of the romance genre, but Bayoán’s visit to the Spaniard determines his decision not to publish his diary. What is intriguing in the passage is the switch from one, likely biased, Spaniard (“un movimiento de desagrado mal oculto”) to the humanity (“tal vez se dormiría la humanidad y las generaciones venideras me culparían de su sueño”). As early as in 1863, Hostos seemed to be aware that every stimulant brought exhaustion eventually. This made him fear that a drugged population would hallucinate and collapse into non-action rather than taking to the streets.

**Conclusions: “Complete Man” and the Phantom of Sobriety**

Hostos attempted to merge literature and positive sciences in pharmaco-literature that, regardless the specific genre, sought “organic” response in the reader. There is still the recurring question, though, of why he did not follow the Enlightenment path of rationalism. In other words, why didn’t he engage himself and his reader through the logical progression of thoughts? Hostos tackled the question of rationalism through the concept of the “complete man.” The latter did not refer to the well-balanced Renaissance man and the non-identity of knowledge. For Hostos, the “complete man” meant a dialectic man facing controversial and distressful modernity, working himself out of his contradictions. The modern life, on the one side, firmly grasped the individual demanding collective action and community integration, while on the other hand, tore the individual apart among incompatible
discourses separating him from himself. In this modern context, the physical body held a vestige of the minimal unity of sense. Some sense lay in the body; the body acquired some truth; and yet complete unity was out of reach. The diversity of competing logics hampered the rational path of Enlightenment.

To act required an artificial chemical prosthesis. On the New Year’s Eve of 1870, inebriated by the festive atmosphere in New York, Hostos glossed over the ever-shifting meaning of the “complete man:”

si yo lego una fuente de estudios psicológicos a los que estudien mi carácter y sepan que esta sencillez candorosa de mi corazón, que esta espontaneidad de afectos, que esta presencia de mis sentimientos en todos los actos y en todos los pensamientos de mi vida, es producto de mi concepto sobre los hombres completos, me lego a mí mismo la vida más difícil que conozco. Como Leopardi (So che natura é sorda/che miserar non sá), y dando gracias pasajeras a Piñeyro que ha vuelto a renovar mis inclinaciones poéticas, trataré de reunir las palabras sin objeto con el objeto inmediato de mis palabras ... ser armonía viviente de todas nuestras facultades, razón, sentimiento y voluntad movidos por consciencia, … un mediador entre el racionalismo excesivo, no por racionalismo, sino por absorber en él todas las demás actividades independientes y necesarias del espíritu, y entre el pasionalismo de los que creen que todo lo hace la pasión, eso es lo que llamo yo ser hombre completo, eso es lo que practico. Y como es tan difícil que los lejanos de mi ideal comprendan mi realidad, y como también es difícil que mi realidad no adultere frecuentemente mi ideal, yo soy un mito, un compuesto de opuestos, una incógnita indespejable. (1: 194-5)

Hostos recurred to the Foucauldian “technologies of the self” (Angel Rivera 23) and completed his disintegrated self in and through autobiographical writing. He approached modern disintegration via classical Enlightenment category of faculties (reason, feeling, will, and consciousness). However, he feared their integration was impossible unless under the ruse of discourse and myth, which in turn contributed to the maze of “fractal interiorities” (Ronell 15) and opened new territories for narcotic explorations.

Many scholars have indicated that fiction produced abomination in Hostos. Although I agree, we should keep in mind two important reservations. Firstly, Hostos detested the plot-centred, genre-limited fiction and the imaginative literature in general when non-dialectical and reductive. Secondly,
he never disregarded fiction as a minor futile exercise. In Moral social, the chapter on novel ended with a sort of literary manifesto of the ethical novel to come in Latin America:

Si el preceptista reclama verdad en la belleza, la estética reclama bien. Si el uno dice que “nada es bello sino lo verdadero”, la otra afirma concienzudamente que “solo es bello lo que es bueno”. Oponer uno a otro principio sería mutilar el arte: combinarlos, será completarlo. La novela, género que aún dispone de vida, porque aún dispone de contrastes entre lo que es y lo que debe ser la sociedad humana, puede contribuir a que el arte, siendo verdadero y siendo bueno, sea completo. Entonces será un elemento de moral social. Cumpla con su deber, y lo será. Mientras tanto, no lo es, entre otros, por ese motivo final: porque no cumple con su deber.

(248)

Hostos proposed some sort of ethical aesthetic that would outdo the traditional dogmas (the Aristotelian unities of action, time, and place; harmony) and mediate the socio-historical sense/“truth” so that the individual and society benefited from art. He warned against being hoaxed with one kind of truth. Nicolas Boileau’s “rien n’est beau que le vrai” functioned anachronistically as the credo of European literary realism and naturalism, according to which art had to exhibit reality as it was. Hostos called for the “complete” art that relied neither on precepts and rules nor on the given “truth” but actively made sense out of the dialectic of form and content. For him, the engagement of artwork with the outside must come from within, unlike in romanticism, realism, and naturalism which “adulterate” reality “aun no queriendo” (247). After the “complete man,” art went after the unaltered sensation and desired sobriety.

In Moral social Hostos, paraphrasing Marx, saw modern fiction as the opium of the reading public: “necesariamente malsana” (244), dangerous (246, 253), and pernicious (246, 249). While “el mundo de la realidad sigue fabricando realidades” (244), art does not respond to the plurality of realities because artists live isolated in their imagination and worry excessively about their popularity (242), which is why they “corrupt” their readership (242). Lured by discursive simulacra, readers lose the ability to observe and comprehend life around them. In the chapter “La moral y el arte,” Hostos depicted a weird hallucinatory picture. Modern art—poetry being its exemplary expression—is compared to:
aquellos encantadores pedazos de tierra, paisajes semovientes, que la corriente del Paraná arranca de sus márgenes y conduce al Plata, de donde van a perderse en las ignoradas lejanías del Atlántico; van con musgo, hierbas, arbustos, árboles y flores, pájaros y sierpes, jaguares y lagartos, sombra y luz, islas flotantes que el morador de la ribera, al verlas pasar tan bellas, tan animadas, tan incitantes, tan risueñas, suspende extasiado la penosa labor de cada día, las sigue con mirada anhelante hasta que se desvanece en la semitiniebla del horizonte, y creyendo que ha vuelto a perder el siempre soñado paraíso suspira y sin lágrimas solloza. (242)

The paradise lost appears disproportionate, offering shapes, colours, sounds, and aromas of the whole world, distorted, and narcotic. Like a drug, the novel produces “un apetito desarreglado de sensaciones” (244), warding the reader off the outside (“el morador de la ribera … suspende extasiado la penosa labor de cada día”), plunging him in his own interiorities (“ha vuelto a perder el siempre soñado paraíso), and isolating him in the chrono-spatial capsule of the narcotic trip. Hostos clarified that addiction functioned at the intersection of chemistry, culture, and body. He argued that reading novels did not do any harm to Saxons, Scandinavians, and Teutonics because reading did not affect their psychic structures. For them, reading was a recreational activity that did not transcend leisure time and the armchair: “momentos de ocio necesario en el seno de la familia en los momentos de la noche que se consagran al hogar” (248). Meanwhile Hispanics were true addicts because the reading turned them melancholic and arrested all their daily activities: “emplean horas continuas, días enteros, meses sucesivos en leer sin descanso” (248).

Writing ran the constant risk of overstimulation while the route of withdrawal replicated the pattern of addiction. Although Hostos desired the “complete man,” “complete” art, and did his best to stay sober, his very definition of sobriety cannot help but arouse suspicion. At the end of his Moral social, Hostos included a glossary which defined sobriety as “abstención de lo que es pernicioso, moral o materialmente” (362).48 While sobriety indicates moderation over any need for policing and abstention, Hostos wished to stay away from all intoxicating agents because he knew that he failed at each step. His failures were at once individual and political. As can be seen in the Diary, Hostos thought that his mission was neither to conspire against the colonial government nor to fight directly but to mobilize Puerto Ricans. To achieve this goal in the short term, however, Hostos required stimulants. He daydreamed: “Para preparar la revolución . . . yo consagraría toda mi fortuna [imaginaria] a llenar de libros elementales, a mandar maestros, a sostener predicadores de la buena
nueva; enemigo de la idolatría, quiero destruirla, haciéndome ídolo bueno, y por un momento” (1: 199-200). Hostos needed the delay (“por un momento”) to activate the psyche of the Puerto Ricans through the mixture of education and faith (“predicadores de la buena nueva,” “idolatry”). Next followed the promise of withdrawal (sobriety), the compromise Hostos invented to legitimize his political project. Thus, the term abstention indicated the will to move out of the off-balance pharmaco-dialectic while paradoxically remaining mediated by the narco-logic. This displaced the centre of dialectic gravity onto the person who was supposed and yet unable, as Hostos soon learnt, to balance pharmaco-agents.

The human psyche and decolonization constituted the core of Hostos’ critical inquiry. He theorized rhetorical manipulations that bypassed the person’s cognitive apparatus. Hostos privileged pharmacy (therapeutic writing) over family romance and displaced the narrative climax into the realm of body politics. La peregrinación de Bayoán and the Diary prefigured modern narration in the nineteenth-century Hispanic Caribbean: multi-layered, with textual plies and ruptures, showing signs of poetic metalanguage, advancing a narco-logic, and surrendering to a narco-analysis. The trope of the drug transferred rhetoric within the body and promised to alter human agency. When faced with the intuition that political mobilization and decolonization required stimulants, Hostos hesitated. His moral agenda shifted back and forth: from the understanding that psychoactive stimulation was inevitable during emancipation—in the letrado project specifically—to the ethical demand to withhold the production of narcotic fictions.

Notes
1. Critics of Hostos have drawn on Ángel Rama’s classic La ciudad letrada and relations of inequality within Latin American societies, overlooking what the Guatemalan writer Franz Galich called the global condition of a “subalterno letrado.”
2. For more details on Hostos’ father’s financial status, see Eugenio Hostos Rodríguez’s memoir, pp. 71, 90.
4. Hostos was acquainted with Emilio Castelar, Francesc Pi i Margall, Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla, Salustiano de Olózaga, Práxedes Mateo Sagasta, Ángel Fernández de los Ríos, General Francisco Serrano, and Servando Ruiz Gómez. There is little contradiction between Hostos’ account that he was suggested as a candidate to deputy from Puerto Rico but disproved of the proposition (1: 126, 2: 31), and the fact corroborated by Argimiro Ruano that Hostos was never officially offered such (35).
5. Hostos collaborated with El Museo Universal, La Soberanía Nacional, Nicolás Azcárate’s La Voz del Siglo, and La Revolución. The latter was a semi-official periodical of the Cuban Junta in New York (1868-1871) and of the Sociedad Auxiliadora de la Independencia de Cuba (1871-1876). He taught at the University of Buenos Aires, Normal School of Santo Domingo, and Liceo Amunátegui, as well as held the position of Chair of Constitutional Law at the University of Chile. He broke up with Carolina/Candorina, Manuela/Nolina, and Carmen Lastarria/Carmela; I would also include in this category his temporary separations from his wife Belinda de Ayala/Inda for allegedly political reasons.
6. Eleven years after the first edition of La peregrinación de Bayoán, in 1874, Hostos commented in his Diary: “Este libro no fue escrito para el vulgo, y no fue comprendido” (2: 137).
7. Hostos vol. 1, pp. 47-51; 2: 21-22, 71-72, 402. About his last duel challenge in 1903, Hostos recognized that “El único momento en que me desorienté y llegué hasta la ridiculez de buscar padrinos para un duelo [emphasis mine], fue cuando ese triste desahogó el encono que parece que tiene también contra mi pobre patria” (2: 402).

8. A passage from Prim describes Hostos as “un antillano … de ideas muy radicales, talentudo y brioso” (102). The following passage is worth reading at large as there we can see Jesús de Tristán Medina, a Cuban writer whom Lezama Lima defined as the only “cursed” figure of the Cuban literature in the 19th century (249-50):

En el pasillo grande del Ateno permanecían dos corrillos de trasnochadores. El más nutrido y bullicioso ocupaba el ángulo próximo a la puerta del Senado; allí analizaban la bárbara trifilca un antillano llamado Hostos, de ideas muy radicales, talentudo y brioso; otro americano, don Calixto Bernal, diminuto, maestro y apóstol de las cuestiones coloniales; Manuel de la Revilla, grande espíritu en un cuerpo misero; Luis Vidart, artillero, filósofo, escritor, poeta… y otros. En el segundo corrillo, junto a la entrada de la Biblioteca, Tubino, Fulgosio, Moreno Nieto, y unos cuantos jóvenes que en aquel nido de la inteligencia se criaban para la oratoria y la política, embromones de afamados republicanos, determinaron que la consecuencia inmediata del sangriento motín era la crisis… ¡crisis total! En el Salón de Lectura sólo quedaba una persona, gravemente silenciosa y abstraída, los ojos clavados en una revista extranjera, y el espíritu a mil leguas de las sangrientas colisiones de aquella noche nefanda… Algunos del corro primero se acercaron a la puerta del Salón, movidos de curiosidad, y vieron la figura menuda, melancólica y calenturienta de Tristán Medina. (102)

From this mise en scène, Pérez Galdós considered Medina to be more radical than Hostos because the former performed the separation that the latter theorized. The spatial disposition of the group of young men among whom Hostos stands—next to the door to the Senate—further suggests they are interested above all in access to power.

9. Ernesto Laclau theorized that “new discourses of liberation” (Emancipation(s) 13) result from symbolic negotiations between radical antagonism and a common ground. Given Hostos’ family situation, the antagonism between him and Spanish colonizers could not have been radical, and yet he imagined it as such through the mediation of “radical otherness” (Emancipation(s) 17) of Spanish colonizers and the Taino, which preserved the operative dichotomy in a displaced context. On the other hand, it is only through intoxicating patriotism that Hostos would be able to achieve a precarious common ground with “his people.”

10. See recent discussions of Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morality and his other books in the volume edited by Horst Hutter Nietzsche’s Therapeutic Teaching for Individuals and Culture, especially Hutter’s “The Nietzsche Cure: New Kinds of ‘Gymnastics of Willing.’”

11. The Ancient Greek pharmakon was theorized by Jacques Derrida in “Plato’s Pharmacy” and René Girard’s Violence and the Sacred; the pharmakon epitomizes early cultural exchanges among literature, politics, and pharmacology.

12. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera’s Conferencias de estética y literatura provides a detailed exposition of the idea of a living form of art in the Hispanic Caribbean (201-3).

13. I approach Hostos’ trembling differently. Soto-Crespo considers a patriotic desire deviant in the Spanish colonial subject. Thus Hostos’ “self-tortures of the mind and tremblings of the flesh” are due to his bad-conscience of deviancy and the subsequent silencing of this structuring deviancy in the foundational discourse (216). I am interested, instead, in how Hostos’ trembling echoed The Phenomenology of Spirit.

14. Although this process was frustrated by the US intervention in Puerto Rico in 1898, scholars like María Acosta Cruz, for instance, claim that effervescences of the anticolonial uprising Grito de Lares and beyond have defined cultural nationalism on the island.

15. Cf. “Tú vistes de jazmines / El arbusto sabeo [café], / Y el perfume le das, que en los festines / la fiebre insana templará a Lio [Dioniso]” or “Y para ti el banano / Desmaya al peso de su dulce carga”. Significantly, Bello included tropical nature and culture into his classic idyll: “El vino es tuyo, que la herida agave / para los hijos vierte / del Anáhuac feliz; y la hoja es tuya, / que, cuando de suave / humo en espiras vagorosas huya / solazará el fastidio al ocio inerte”.

16. Cf. José Emilio González’s intuition: “nada más contrario a Hostos que la idea de una acción revolucionaria sin pensamiento” (77).

17. The phonetic equivalence (“sima”—“cima”) is open to a postcolonial type of speculation because the sounds /s/ and /θ/ are still different phonemes in peninsular Spanish. The dichotomy of a chasm and a summit preserves some, although unstable, sense at the metropolitan centre, while in Latin America this phonemic difference disappeared from speech and is preserved as a custom and historical trace.

18. Some exceptions include Caso, Aragunde, Richard Rosa, Angel Rivera, and Campos Johnson.

19. Here a difficult research question is worth positing: how then to elaborate a feasible reading strategy for Hostos traversed by aporias and contradictions? I suggest this can be achieved by paying attention to dialectical movements both of several contiguous paragraphs and the work in question.

20. See Caso’s emblematic interpretation of Hostos’ significance: “Pero hay algo de su labor que en cierto modo perdura y que, resistiendo los ultrajes del olvido, habrá de alentarnos y acompañarnos en nuestra peregrinación indefinida; hay algo
The text contains a mixture of direct quotes and excerpts from other works, discussing topics such as Slavery in Puerto Rico and Cuba, Hostos' work, and Hegelianism in nineteenth-century Spain. It references various works including Hostos, Nietzsche, and Hegel, analyzing their contributions and interpretations. The text also touches on the reception of Hegel's ideas among Spanish intellectuals, the role of Krausism, and the impact of Hostos' work on modernistas and other writers. It includes a detailed analysis of the Phenomenology of Spirit and its reception in Spain, comparing it to other works like The Science of Logic and Madame Bovary. The text also discusses the influence of Hegel on literature and art, and the role of Krausism in modern Spanish thought.
38. That is, between a will and a will; a will to actively participate in social life and a will to terminate any such participation.
39. The editor says about Bayoán: ¿Creerá ahora el lector que Bayoán era un loco…? Pues, sépalo el lector: Bayoán no era nada. La casualidad me ha dado la palabra. Nada: eso era Bayoán; la nada de un todo” (263).
40. Everyone trembles in the novel. See a few out of many representative examples: “¡Hombre lógico! ¿Quién es capaz de concebir ese ideal sin temblar en todas las raíces de su ser al concebirlo?” (22); “¡Ah, patria mía! Con razón temblaba yo al alejarme de ti: yo no debí alejarme: tu cielo, tu sol, tu campo, tu cordillera, mi mismo corazón me amenazaban” (87); “Me acuerdo de Marién, y tiemblé al pensar en su tristeza, cuando dirige su mirada al cielo. El sol entristece más que alumbra. Vuelvo a pensar en ella y me acomojo y me espanto. Vuelvo a imaginar, a desvariar, a ver en mi interior el mismo cuadro pavoroso, que en vano intento no ver, que me persigue, que me acosa, que me tiene temblando, intranquilo, en zozobra” (184); “Implacable fijeza de ideas…. ¡Conque es cierto….? ¿Conque cuando un pensamiento nos domina, es necesario obedecerle, o de luchar con él, enloquecer….? ¡Ya no me sirve de nada mi razón….! No la obedezco. A quien obedezco, a quien voy a obedecer…. ¿Qué crimen he cometido yo que estoy temblando?” (296); “El crimen premeditado es imposible. Si la sola exageración de un pensamiento convierte un derecho legítimo en delito y al ir a cometerlo tiembla tanto y sufre tanto, ¿cómo puede el criminal….? ¡Sí, lo comprendo….! La fascinación lo arrastra…” (301).
41. There is a circular structure in play: Bayoán resumes his pilgrimage as the reader learns that Bayoán’s first encounter with European sciences had been a failure (56-7).
42. For the reconstruction of his navigation route, see Sarah Wamester Bares (44).
43. See Doris Sommer’s critique of Manuel de Jesús Galván’s *Enriquillo* based on the book’s lack of sensitivity to such forced alliances (*One Master for Another* 63-6). In chapter three I return to this problematic in more detail.
44. Marién articulates her nostalgia in public voice, but Bayoán overhears a different story in her dream: “Sí, sí, me acuerdo… aquí bajo estos árboles, el beso… ¡No oyes los sinsontes?”
45. The text suggests the contrast between the light penetrating the dark night of reason (Bayoán’s writing) and the languishing female body that stays intact (e.g. 244).
46. Also see Silvio Bedini and David Buisseret’s *The Christopher Columbus Encyclopedia*, pp. 430-42.
47. Cf. from the second prologue: “Desde el punto de vista del arte, pocas concepciones podían ser tan patéticas; desde el punto de vista de la realidad, pocas verdades más conmoveras que la representada por Bayoán, para el cual eran necesarios los sacrificios más dolorosos, obligatorias las situaciones más absurdas, lógicos los tormentos más horribles, no por ser él una personalidad monstruosa sino por ser una entera que luchaba con una sociedad monstruosa . . . me parecía que todo el libro, que todas sus intenciones, que todas sus recitencias caerían como acusaciones fulminantes contra España . . . De la maldición a la explosión, un solo paso!” (28-9)
48. By contrast, *DRAE* defined sobriety as “templanza y moderación, especialmente en comer y beber” (1884 ed.).
Chapter 2

Pharmacy and Gender Emancipation in Amelia Francasci

. . . la pluma ha corrido, ha corrido; y no he sabido detenerla

—Francasci

The Dominican author Amelia Francasci (1850-1941) advanced her personal version of therapeutic writing. Similar to other contemporary authors, she dealt with different kinds of traumatizing events, some of which were rather unique to her life story while others, no less intimately experienced for that reason, intertwined with complex class, gender, and race relations of inequality. Hostos blamed his apathy on the colonial condition. At the time that he gained awareness of the habit-forming properties of some drugs, he still recurred to stimulant writing because he required energy—imagined insufficient—to fight for the political liberation of Puerto Rico. While Hostos approached writing from the perspective of the colonized self, Francasci’s preoccupations centered on the gendered self and the potential of pharmacy to boost women’s agency without trespassing social norms.

For what reasons might pharmacy have attracted a turn-of-the-century Dominican female writer? Pharmacy developed at a dizzying pace during the nineteenth century and quickly outperformed medicine, still dominated by the miasma theory of disease, especially on the periphery of empire. First, some chemical compounds such as alkaloids were isolated from plants, others such as chloroform were synthesized, while some familiar compounds, for instance ether, found new applications as anaesthetics. The new products gradually made their way into Dominican therapeutic protocols. Second, nineteenth-century Dominican physicians assisted “natural” recovery, understood as restoration of balance among bodily humours. Pharmacy instead underwent modernization earlier as the Paracelsus-inspired toxicology deliberated the importance of dose and sustained that the same substance could be benign or harmful, if administered incorrectly.¹ Physicians reacted by warning against many available medications. Normative medicine continued to rely on herbal teas and dieting while the literary imagination associated pharmacy with chemical and potentially highly toxic remedies.² Third, pharmacy involved commerce more than medicine did. At the time, most Dominican medical doctors were still clinicians by training and career even if they managed to establish a private practice on the side. Meanwhile pharmacists’ main objective was to sell their goods, which implied both greater capital circulation as well as openness to imports and original, marketable ideas. This
turned pharmacists into suspects of fraud. Fourth, the mercantile logic led pharmacy to compete with the institutions of medicine and religion, nonetheless forming provisional alliances with them as well as with various occult practitioners when convenient.3 Last but not least, despite being banned from medical practice, pharmacists kept seeing patients either in the trasbotica, or in the comfort of the patients’ homes and gave them illegitimate therapeutic advice. With time pharmacists began advocating for self-medication and for providing patients with education about the properties and administration of drugs.

To writers, pharmacy looked promising as an ambiguous modernizing agent. For late Romantics, pharmacy held the appeal of contrast between the sacred (“philosophical” science) and the profane (trade, artisanal tools); between modernity (scientific and industrial innovation) and the occult (alchemy, folk remedies). To early feminist authors such as Francasci, pharmacy gave the opportunity to challenge patriarchal medical authority over a woman’s body. Yet pharmacy outlined a non-radical way of resistance for the reason that pharmacy—as a drug store, a marketplace, but also specific ways of thinking and doing4—actively pursued monetary interests and adapted to and influenced ideologies. Although many outstanding political figures of the time were pharmacists, pharmacy—being a lucrative business—rather compensated for than encouraged involved political activity. As the period of political turmoil ruled out professions in civil service, education, and journalism for many writers because those occupations did not generate enough income, some turned to pharmacy to earn a living.5 Pharmacy’s adaptability certainly attracted elite women writers that wished to protect their privileges under changing political regimes.6 Additionally, pharmacy’s ambiguity, I argue, significantly undermined the Manichean view of human society and offered instead imagery for less binary literary expression.

Unlike the twentieth-century feminist writers, Francasci did not write from a position of an enlightened, emancipated, let alone a libertarian woman.7 Catharina Vallejo claims that Francasci positioned herself “muy firmemente en el extremo del sector tradicionalista de su sociedad, al promover pautas de rígida conciencia moral, propias de un catolicismo ultra conservador” (275). My argument will nuance and complicate Vallejo’s conclusion. Although Francasci complied with and modelled her behaviour on the religious and moral dogmas of her time, Francasci’s writing served as a semi-legitimate way out of her apathy and political marginalization. While women received voting rights in the Dominican Republic only in 1942—and mainly because the dictator Rafael Leónidas
Trujillo counted on their support—Francasci imagined women’s patriotic participation in politics alongside male citizens at the turn of the century.

Francasci projected an intriguing alternative space for women’s emancipation—a space of disagreement opened by the intense professional competition among religion, medicine, pharmacy, and literature. By competition I understand different ways of self-promotion while discrediting of others’ knowledge or its relevance in specific domains; such competition did not preclude collaboration, which can be illustrated by the way medicine, pharmacy, and religion relied on each other for the care of the sick. Francasci described and attempted to challenge the interiorized self-deficiency of women and the need to identify with men figures to write and act. Patriarchy’s attempts to control women’s minds and bodies depended on disciplinary knowledge. Scientists presented the body of their knowledge as all-encompassing and absolute. Yet if disciplines were to be considered separately, their share of knowledge was fragmentary. Educated professionals and clergy constantly tested the limits and jurisdiction of their rival occupations. They frequently encroached on one another’s territory, which suggested institutional and disciplinary vulnerability. The clashes of medicine with religion, and of pharmacy with both, over the ailing psyche demonstrated the frailty of each institution’s claim to “truth.” Hence, women experienced a relative sense of freedom by collecting contradictory advice from different systems of knowledge and either choosing which authority to follow or dismissing them altogether as untrustworthy.

In the domain of literature, French fiction, poetry, and aesthetic theory continued functioning as the point of reference, but a precarious consensus within the domain had broken. French artists—soon joined by Dominicans—disputed the aesthetics of rival schools, movements, and styles on an unprecedented scale. Building on Balzac and Flaubert’s realism, Émile Zola theorized radical mimesis by analogy to medical knowledge. The alternative turn-of-the-century literary imagination framed pharmacy as a compensatory logic; pharmacy complimented the clinic and emphasized other forms of self-knowledge such as euphoric and pseudo-mystical insights.

Francasci started her uneven writing career around the age of forty, after being prompted by three men figures: her priest Fernando A. de Meriño, her brother Eugenio de Marchena Sánchez, and her ailing husband Rafael de Leyba. In 1893-1894, she released the first chapters of her novel Madre culpable as feuilletons in Francisco Gregorio Billini’s liberal newspaper “El Eco de la Opinión.”
full edition of the novel came out in 1901, the same year Francasci published her *Recuerdos e impresiones: historia de una novela* and her best novel *Francisca Martinoff*. The next year, three short stories appeared in the collection *Cierzo en primavera*. Then followed a period of silence until 1926 when Francasci published *Monseñor de Meriño Íntimo*; and two years later, in 1928, the first six chapters of her unfinished novel *Impenetrable* came out in the literary magazine “Panfilia.”¹³ In contrast to this official version of Francasci’s writing journey, the autobiographical narrator in *Monseñor de Meriño* confessed that Francasci aspired to write since her adolescence. Long before her acquaintance with Meriño, she completed an early novel the most part of which she destroyed after showing the text to the priest because “contenía algunos episodios, que podían suponerse vividos y disgustase a la familia” (*Monseñor* 232). Although the manuscript might have never existed except as a part of self-fabulation, Francasci’s testimony acknowledges that she dealt with extremely tangled and contradictory, yet systematic prejudices against women authors. As a defense mechanism, Francasci developed an intricate surveillance system that censored her writing from within. If early Hostos experienced censorship as a colonial subject in Spain, Francasci knew her writing and behaviour was scrutinized at all times on the topic of moral hygiene. Adopting a socially acceptable language system, she codified her resistance through the medicalized discourse of ill-being and sought therapy for her physical and psychic disorders in writing.

**Self-Medication in *Monseñor de Meriño Íntimo***

By practicing writing as a kind of therapy, Francasci infringed on the religious, medical, and pharmaceutical domains traditionally dominated by men. This brought the metaphor of therapeutic writing into dangerous proximity with “unconventional healing practices” (Duffy 74) and quackery. Joan Torres-Pou, for instance, considers as a weakness *Monseñor de Meriño*’s failure to deliver on its sham promise: to tell the reader about the archbishop’s intimate life. Therefore, the scholar disregards and devalues the many challenges and subtleties of Francasci’s autobiographical writing in the shadow of Meriño’s imposing figure. Roberto Cassá calls Meriño “el prelado de mayor relevancia en la historia de la Iglesia católica dominicana” (49). Backed by the liberal military leader Gregorio Luperón, Meriño served as president of the Dominican Republic in 1880-1882. In 1885, the Vatican designated him archbishop—Meriño had attempted to negotiate his appointment at least since the 1860s—considering “la autoridad que le confería su condición de ex presidente” (Cassá 49-50). He closely collaborated with the dictator Ulises Heureaux to dismantle the secular education system that Hostos had been
cultivating since 1880, and he served as rector of the Instituto Profesional for almost three decades. Under the pressures of this monumental cultural archive Torres-Pou concludes that Francasci used Meriño as a mere excuse to analyze her own condition of a gendered writer: “la figura del arzobispo de Santo Domingo no es más que el método que le permite a la autora hablar de aquel aspecto de sí misma que sentía más cuestionado, su faceta creativa” (39). He contrasts her writing with Rosa Duarte’s and praises the latter’s due to its humbleness and historical value of the detail that Rosa Duarte provided about her prominent exiled brother Juan Pablo Duarte (34-35). Torres-Pou argues that “En una época en la que las escritoras trascendían el ámbito familiar con timidez, ella [Francasci] alardea de escritora, consejera, mujer de negocios, ideóloga y política” (40). Reproducing the nineteenth-century discourse, he devalues Francasci’s narrative and dismisses her social influence as “más fruto de su imaginación que otra cosa” (40). I argue, though, that Torres-Pou’s conclusions seem to miss the point.

When Francasci wished to tell her story, her charlatan consciousness suggested that she lacked necessary qualifications to exercise the literary profession legitimately. In their classical study Madwoman in the Attic, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar call this disadvantage, specifically blooming in the nineteenth century, the “anxiety of authorship” which they understand as “a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a ‘precursor’ the act of writing will isolate or destroy her” (49). At that time, women writers lacked the protection of a literary institution and a respected tradition. They confronted the distressful situation in which their exercise of the men dominated profession was deemed eccentric and often turned out to be socially alienating. However, the attitude toward women authors was rather ambiguous in the Dominican Republic. Due to the perceived overall deficit of literary talent, women were occasionally welcomed into the profession under men-imposed conditions. Yet the epithets “eccentric” and “exotic” haunted Francasci’s literary career. On the other hand, Meriño implied more than Francasci’s “anxiety of authorship.” Francasci deliberately used Meriño to lure the reader to her writing. She exploited the reader’s voyeuristic desire to spy on the private life of a prominent public and ecclesiastic figure through his intimate correspondence with a woman.

If anything, Monseñor de Meriño narrates a woman artist’s growth out of crisis into maturity. Meriño functions as a secondary character in the book that flaunts his name on the cover. Francasci’s psychogenic pain constitutes the narrative frame. The narration opens with Francasci’s intense moral crisis and her urge to prevent the forbidden suicide. “Atravesaba yo una de esas crisis morales,” reads
the very first sentence, and it is not until the second part of the book that Francasci reproduced Meriño’s first letter. When the archbishop is dying at the end of the book, Francasci cannot stay by his side: partly because she is bedridden herself and partly because she is afraid to break social and clerical norms by frequenting Meriño. She realizes that he is dead when she hears the cathedral’s big bell toll, which merges with the divine voice in her delirious mind. The voice calls upon Dominicans to mourn the irreparable loss and reassures Meriño’s entrance into the kingdom of divine glory. Yet at the same time, “¡... esas palabras divinas fueron consuelo sublime a mi dolor!” (313). Thus, the archbishop functions as an efficient remedy since even after his death he provides Francasci with the consolation that she had prefigured for herself.

Besides this underlying marketing strategy—for Francasci was a professional merchant after all—Meriño’s figure displaces pains of self-figuration. She avoided in part what Sylvia Molloy calls the “textual self-confrontation” when the writer realizes that he is the matter of his book (3). Rather, through the writing of her separation from Meriño, his death, and anticipation of the looming narrative closure, Francasci intuited herself at the limits of her being. Paul de Man linked autobiography to epitaphs and prosopopoeia—from prosopon poien, “to confer a mask or a face” (926)—that is to ever-failing attempts to materialize and embody the voice (and name) in writing. This allowed him to connect autobiography and self-figuration to certain textual phantasms such as deprivation of senses and disfiguration, juxtaposed to complexities of restoration (930). In Molloy’s words, a referentiality of autobiography, and of any text for that matter, “may be a mirage of the text itself” (155). Yet Francasci refused to face the annihilation and silence of death. Instead death is an ever-remote and hence all more frightful and painful spectacle. Her narrator is a coward; at the sight of Meriño’s tomb, she jibs, backs off, and turns her gaze away from any possible confrontation of her own mortality and textual cessation. She choses anaesthesia and, in her delirium, overhears God address the Dominican people. Francasci’s autobiographicalal narrative, and we will see the same move repeated in Francisca Martinoff, ends with death paired up with a multitude, noise, and exclamation marks whose function is to dull her pain of self-knowledge (“Y esas palabras divinas fueron consuelo sublime a mi dolor!”)

However, before surrendering to the divine remedy, Francasci mimicked a doctor and attempted to uncover the roots of her ill-being. She questioned the dominant view about “esa mujer del XIX que se escribe a sí misma” (Queiro 80-81). In her last unfinished novel symbolically titled Impenetrable, the protagonist Carolina invents the character Alba Marina and writes the fake Confesión
de un alma triste on the latter’s behalf. Yet since the Confession is authored by a woman, no one doubts the genre of autobiography, least Don Pedro Tilo who falls in love with Alba Marina as if she were Carolina. Despite being narrow-minded and ludicrous, Don Pedro Tilo supposedly controls the discourse; both as the narrator of Impenetrable and as a literary journalist upon whose judgement Carolina’s writing career depends. This fragment demonstrates that Francasci realized that women’s writing inadvertently supplied the demand for the feminine inside, her “soul” laid bare with the medical precision of detail. Yet, rather than denouncing women’s subaltern position, she espoused pharmaceutic fantasies.

The Dominican society tolerated women’s writing insofar as it was fiction, product of imagination and whims alone, disconnected from “reality” and consumed by women readers as a way of amusement. Therefore, Francasci was expected to hold back her personal, lived experiences or the ones that might have been interpreted as such. The society thoroughly policed the imagination of women authors. While men authors followed moral principles as well—in large because they had women readers—they enjoyed access to exterior and interior spaces forbidden to their gendered colleagues. We can think of a brothel, a nocturnal café, and a masquerade ball as some of the symbolic places banned to women authors, although they became popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth literature by men. Planta maldita (1906) and Estercolero (1901) by the Puerto Rican Jewish writer José Elías Levis explored the nocturnal life of the artistic bohemia in Havana, as well as prostitution, alcoholism, addiction to morphine, and domestic violence in San Juan. Masquerade set the action in Hostos’s La tela de araña as well as in Tapia y Rivera’s Postumo el transmigrado and Postumo el envirginiado. Despite giving insights into dangerous behaviours, these novels were tolerated as long as the moral of the story promised to restore order. Instead, women had to imagine, yet not to fantasize; their writing had to contain neither emotional truth nor projection outside the dull domestic space and love discourse centered around a male subject of desire.

Pharmacy released fantasy in Francasci’s writing. She cherished to speak in her own voice about her personal circumstances. The Dominican literary scene did not guarantee this right to women authors yet, when Francasci aspired to much more than being able to speak publicly about her private life and expose the “naked truth.” Bit by bit, her writing carved place for dreams, fantasies, desires, and aesthetic invention for a woman author. To neutralize internal and external censorship, Francasci secured the support of Meriño as well as that of his friends Manuel de Jesús Galván and Federico
Henríquez y Carvajal. Their favourable view of Francasci’s literary enterprise legitimized her writing. On the level of poetics, she invented a ruse that would distance the model woman from what was considered dangerous behaviour. Francasci made her female protagonists act as if through the inadvertent consumption of medications.

When I refer to the Dominican society’s intervention in the literary profession in the late nineteenth century after literature had been institutionalized to some degree, it is because women authors were excluded from this institutionalization. Instead, they were embedded within the institution of family—directly related to the society—and scrutinized through *el que dirán*. As a result, women authors did not enjoy the same degree of professional freedom as men, however limited it was for the latter. On the other hand, society is constituted by groups and political forces that are complimentary or in opposition to one another. Dominican society of the time dealt with tremendous socio-economic and political unrest, which destabilized old class, gender, and race alliances. The criticism that Francasci received during her lifetime was symptomatic of a greater confrontation between conservative and progressive/liberal forces in the Dominican Republic. The distinction between the two did not map neatly into separate groups, political parties, or even specific actors but rather constituted two distinct sets of values and approaches to the management of society. Although most ranchers and clergy were supporters of the conservative Rojo Party of Buenaventura Báez (Cassá 62), Meriño adhered to the Azul Party’s liberalism in matters of political sovereignty and capitalist development, while his ideas on education remained conservative. Meanwhile, another important figure in *Monseñor de Meriño*, the Azul Party sympathizer Emiliano Tejera, developed an unchecked liberal imagery that damaged national interests. Teresita Martínez-Vergne points out that “As late as 1907, when the Dominico-American convention was signed, turning over customs collections and the management of debt service to the United States, Emiliano Tejera, minister of foreign relations, asserted that critics of the convention were wrong in thinking that the Dominican Republic was losing autonomy. Just the opposite, he argued; the island was protecting itself from continued indebtedness to other countries” (20).

By the end of the nineteenth century and until the US occupation in 1916, most educated elites gathered around Hostos’s liberal education project, which attempted to reform the public’s attitudes. Yet Francasci was too eccentric—and thus uncontrollably dangerous—for the liberal moral social. Her grandnephew, a musical composer and Trujillato politician Enrique de Marchena y Dujarric reported...
that Hostos disliked Francasci’s romance novel: “revisando los primeros capítulos de *Madre Culpable* en 1890, le expresó a Amelia reservas, y le suplicó no publicarlos” (200). Pedro Henríquez Ureña disapproved of Francasci’s “sentimental” style. The nineteen-year-old Pedro Henríquez Ureña commented in a letter to Mercedes Mota: “De Amelia Francasci no hay que hablar; es la disparatera más grande entre las dominicanas, el peor discípulo que ha formado Meriño” (Vega 125). Vallejo explains the educated elites’ scepticism through their political divergence with Francasci, which the mentioning of Meriño by Pedro Henríquez Ureña seems to confirm: “En épocas cuando la élite se consideraba progresista y liberal, no es de sorprender que las obras de Francasci no fueran bien vistas, ni nunca reeditadas” (Vallejo 275). In this manner, the liberal elites criticized Francasci’s writing for not being realist and therefore not representing the Creole reality, while Francasci herself cared about the conservative sectors of the society which might have disliked her texts to the extent that those “podían suponerse vividos.”

**Nineteenth-Century Pharmacy as a Profession**

Pharmacy occupied an interim zone between places accessible and forbidden to women. Although pharmacy connected women to scientific advances and technology through their bodies, the institution itself was controlled by men. The novel *Madame Bovary* illustrates and interprets this gendered dynamic in post-revolutionary France. Larry Duffy argues that pharmacy served as a site in which many nineteenth-century epistemological and aesthetic preoccupations converged. He draws on Jonathan Simon’s research that examines the institutional redefinition of pharmacy following the separation of chemistry into a scientific discipline at the turn of the nineteenth century and the introduction of the two-tier system of health practitioners under the Empire and July Monarchy. Until the late eighteenth century, chemists were apothecaries by training and profession; mingling with spicers (épiciers) and barbers: “Scientific chemists, more or less indistinguishable from apothecaries, were concerned primarily with the pharmaceutical contribution of their science to the healing of the sick” (Duffy *Flaubert* 38). The French Revolution might have guillotined the “father of modern chemistry,” Antoine Lavoisier, for “adulterating” tobacco, that is, for acting like a chemist. However, the French Empire under Napoleon Bonaparte institutionalized chemistry as a theoretical discipline (*chimie philosophique*). The institutional reforms, specifically the laws of 19 Ventôse and 21 Germinal in year XI (1803), secured the differentiation of elite doctors and pharmacists trained in leading medical schools from the *officiers de santé*. The latter’s licence was restricted to the department in
whose local hospital they were apprenticed and certified (Simon 118-119). On the professional level, this growing centralization along with the separation of chemistry created the pressing need to reinvent pharmacy as epitomized by the pharmacist-chemist Homais from *Madame Bovary*.

The new pharmacy broadened its areas of expertise through the reimagined alliance with *chimie philosophique* and encroached on other “disciplinary and subdisciplinary fields” such as medicine, public hygiene, toxicology, forensic medicine, and agriculture (Duffy, *Flaubert* 15). Unlike the unambitious *officier de santé* Charles Bovary, Homais expresses many ideas that prove him a voracious reader of professional literature (Duffy, “Madame” 72). In conversation, he demonstrates a full grasp of the latest pharmaceutical developments. Although the law of 19 Ventôse prohibited the exercise of medicine to unlicensed practitioners, Homais keeps his consultation in the *arrière-boutique*. He overuses Latin terminology, wishes to monopolize jam-making in town, and sends articles on an agricultural parasite to the Academy. Homais isolates a storeroom for his tools and supplies where he performs mundane pharmacy-related business such as “labelling, decanting, repackaging” (243). Yet he represents his “capharnaum” as “a veritable sanctuary” in which “selfishly withdrawing from the world, he could revel in the pursuit of his favourite occupations” (243). When Homais finds Emma in critical condition, rather than inserting his fingers in her throat, which according to Dr. Larivièrè must have saved Emma’s life, Homais performs a tedious and untimely toxicological analysis. Finally, as an earnest nineteenth century scientist, Homais remunerates in elegant “philosophical” observations over Emma’s cadaver.

The reform of Dominican pharmacy, in turn, dates to the Haitian occupation (1822-1844). Dominican historiography describes this period in terms of economic and cultural decline; Santo Domingo lost its status of capital city to Port-au-Prince, Cap-Haïtien, and Les Cayes in the time the present-day Dominican Republic was reorganized into two remote eastern departments. Soon after the occupation, the Haitian government de facto closed the University of Saint Thomas of Aquinas by conscripting all students for mandatory military service without regard to their class and race (Moscoso Puello vol 6 22). At the same time, this government abolished the Spanish colonial law and imposed new laws and ideology on the Dominican population. Haitian legislation for its part was basically copied from post-revolutionary France. After gaining their independence from Haiti, Dominicans modified—rather than repealed—many Haitian laws; among them those that regulated the functioning of hospitals, medical doctors, apothecaries, and *boticas*. 
By 1822, the Dominican pharmacy still ran under the protomedicato, established in the kingdom of Castile in the late fifteenth century. The Real Tribunal del Protomedicato was a licencing, supervising, and taxing unit. The Royal law of March 30, 1477 authorized the protomedicato tribunal to oversee physicians, surgeons, bonesetters (ensalmadores), apothecaries, spicers (especieros), herbalists, and other health-related trades. The protomédicos charged fees for licensing and dealt with malpractice and quackery, especially among the proliferating apothecaries and alternative medicine practitioners. The metropolitan protomedicato soon evolved into a collegial structure. In the nineteenth century, the Cádiz Cortes introduced a balanced representation among medical professions, adding two professors of pharmacy to the already present two of medicine, two of surgery, and one of chemistry on the protomedicato tribunal. Moreover, in Spain there were many other guild-like and professional associations that contested the protomedicato’s competence and outreach.21 Meanwhile in the Dominican Republic one protomédico represented the colonial protomedicato, which clearly privileged medical doctors over other professions. According to Moscoso Puelló, prior to 1822 there were no private drugstores, and the drugstore at the Real Hospital de San Nicolás de Bari in Santo Domingo experienced hardships due to fierce competition with doctors who prepared and sold all medications by themselves (vol. 5 384). According to Guy Despeignes, the Haitian legislation attempted to diversify the healthcare market by protecting the rights of separate health professions (59-61). The law of May 12, 1826 (loi sur la taxe des médecins et des chirurgiens) made doctors and surgeons issue prescriptions to be executed by licensed pharmacists, if there were any (L’instant vol. 4 477; Art. 4).

The provision to privilege the pharmacist’s expertise and merchandise had been preceded by two important institutional moves. First, due to the lack of doctors and surgeons trained abroad and lack of a functioning medical school in Haiti, the law of March 3, 1808 (la loi sur l’organisation du service de santé des hôpitaux militaires de la République) created “health schools” (écoles de santé) in the main military hospitals. The écoles de santé graduated officiers de santé of 3 classes, whose preparation though was rather basic (L’instant vol. 1 410; Art. 4-5). Their general level of education was not much higher, a fact that generated some criticism (Moscoso Puelló vol. 5 20). Second, the same laws that had derogated the status of the medical profession indirectly promoted the status of pharmacists. Earlier there were few patented pharmacists trained abroad, most were mere craft practitioners. However, now pharmacists received the same degree of officier de santé after completing their training in one of the military hospitals or through another certified pharmacist. Additionally, the
same medical jury licensed both doctors and pharmacists. Although I do not have sufficient data to analyze the functioning of these laws in the Dominican Republic under the Haitian rule—nor is this the time period I am interested in—Dominicans inherited the Haitian healthcare system after the independence in 1844 and used it, slightly modified, for the rest of the nineteenth century.

While there was a two-tier system of medical practitioners in France—elite graduates of prestigious medical schools versus provincial-bound offiers de santé—in Haiti offiers de santé prevailed among the healthcare practitioners. After its independence, the Dominican Republic dropped the title of the oficial de sanidad, but the level of medical and general education remained low for a long time. By contrast, pharmacists enjoyed a boost to their status when they were equated with medical doctors and then became the privileged suppliers of medications. Given the political instability in the country when government employment did not guarantee stable income, pharmacy soon consolidated into a rather lucrative while not so demanding occupation. As a result, many aspiring elites turned to the profession, either for themselves or for their children.

The Tejera family illustrates this institutional transformation. As we will see, Francasci described her significant friendship with Emiliano Tejera, the third-generation Dominican whose great-grandfather, Antonio Tejera was an artilleryman, born in Zaragoza. His grandfather, Vicente Tejera, became a surgeon and performed many amputations together with the Venezuelan doctor José Cruz Limardo y Villanueva (Moscoso Puello v. 4 360). In comparison to a doctor, the profession of a surgeon was less reputable at the time when perioperative mortality was high and generated less income as surgeons were usually salaried employees of a hospital. Emiliano Tejera’s father, Juan Nepomuceno Tejera Tejada, climbed up the social ladder even more: he actively participated in healthcare administration as a medical doctor. Emiliano Tejera chose the profession of a pharmacist instead, which gave him enough economic stability and social prestige to serve as a public intellectual and Minister of Finance.

Thus in the nineteenth-century Dominican Republic the pharmacist’s position in society and discourse consolidated, albeit remaining under the suspicion of dishonest practices. Besides a comparable and—through the mediation of Haiti and French education—not unrelated historical development, another crucial parallelism between Madame Bovary and Francisca Martinoff lies in their serious inquiry into gender dynamics in the access to pharmaceuticals and production of
pharmaceutical knowledge. The juxtaposition of these two texts—although geographically and aesthetically distant—allows me to examine the relationship between women and the new pharmacy. Does and to what extent Francasci’s autobiographical narrator—like or unlike Emma Bovary—fit in the pharmacy’s sabotage of the disciplinary and economic order?

**Pharmacy and Gender: Parallels between Emma Bovary and Francasci’s Protagonists**

Even in a book-length study of Flaubert, otherwise insightful, Duffy leaves the body, which happened to be Emma’s but could have been any body for his account, compliant and prostrate on the deathbed. Duffy argues that “Madame Bovary incorporates discourse concerned precisely with the administration of substances—harmful or curative—to the body, to the extent of providing a model for literature itself, or at least for a type of documentary literary practice which engages materially with reality beyond its ever-expanding representative scope” (Flaubert 80). Hence Duffy acknowledges that the body and the text resemble each other inasmuch as the incorporated matter preserves—and at some point releases—unassimilated residue within the live and textual corpora. However, he reduces Emma’s paradoxical body to an object of scientific gaze and manipulee of disciplinary knowledge. Ronell instead tracks Emma’s progressive dying off through the novel and so identifies the dying body as singular, infallibly Emma’s (111). Early on, Emma bleeds; as she sews, she keeps “pricking her fingers and raising them to her lips to suck them” (Flaubert 14). When her body ceased to reabsorb toxic fluids at the end, “a flood of black liquid came from her mouth,” as though her body vomited the blood she sucked in before (Flaubert 327). For Tom Cohen, this leakage “evacuates the remaining debris of old models of interiority” (206) and “catapults the repetitions of an addiction—that is, chemical, semantic, referential, and temporal addictions, even those supposedly birthing “modernism” (or its feint)—to a sort of hemorrhagic fever where borders of cells and organs dissolve” (208). In the mid-nineteenth century, literary realism apparently disposed of magic and sorcery. However, doctors, charlatans, deadly diseases, and chiefly inefficient treatments populated realist fiction, representing the new medical regime. Closely monitoring his father’s operating theatre, Flaubert proposed a new pharmaceutic vision for writing. For him, representation became secondary in relation to specific wording. Style, this “mercurial and corrosive ink” (Cohen 206), dissolved literature’s age-old addictions (to the sacred authority, morals, historical referentiality, plausibility, chronology) and centered on the author’s singular and mind-altering language.
The drug addict colonized the woman’s body since women did not enjoy direct and legitimate access to the new scientific pharmacy. Complementing Duffy’s criticism, I argue that at the end of the novel the public recognized Homais’ pharmacy not only because a bunch of professional players reinvented pharmacy as a scientific enterprise but also because pharmacy disguised the arrière-boutique and the capharnaum behind its glassy shop window. Unable to eradicate all hallucinatory, “prefigural agency” (Cohen 206), the nineteenth century society confined drugs and magic under the surveillance of an expert. Emma pronounces Homais’ laboratory as the only place of interest in the dull provincial town of Yonville (Flaubert 69-70); yet the doors of the capharnaum are securely closed for her under the excuse of care. Women used to practice folk medicine, but because an increasing number of medications were deemed potentially dangerous, women now required medical intermediaries to access drugs. Emma seeks ecstasy, no matter whether in romantic novels, religion, glamour, or love affairs. What kills her instead is the suffocating provincial atmosphere paired with the excess of care and cure; the exhausted economy in which the entrepreneurial movement is minimized. After all, didn’t Bousquet’s L’Amour conjugal suggest that arsenic was supposed to cure venereal diseases, that is, the consequences of extramarital sexual life (cit. in Duffy “Madame” 78)? Additionally, Bousquet’s book represents “bad literature” in the novel; Homais proscribes it even to his apprentice not to say to a woman (Flaubert 245).25 Thus Emma cheats because there is no other way to act of her own will.

At the historical moment when the redefined and regrouped sciences attempted to impose the material regime of positivity and to bound intoxicating agents, Emma opposes both the rough materiality—the quotidian “dull” being—and the falling back into transcendence. Ronell does not limit Madame Bovary’s reading to “variants of housewifely neurosis, unmastered lovesickness, ‘Bovarysme,’ or even frustrated writing habits” (109).26 By feeling disgust, blushing, bleeding, and of course vomiting, Emma “relieve[s] the body of itself while resisting its sublation into ideality, spirit, or consciousness” (63). Ronell contends that Flaubert viewed drugs not “as a conduit of escape but as present at the base of life” (104). This is an important argument that connects the drug addict to ontology rather than alienating her from the “real.” The finitude presents itself unveiled and “naked” to hallucinating Emma. And since the numbing and non-feeling of the quotidian introduce boredom and death, Emma expedites and expends her finitude through hallucination.

Now, although Flaubert and Francasci transgressed the positive pharmacy, their gender-inclusive pharmacy constituted a non-radical resistance to social order. Francasci witnessed the
vertiginous rotation of governments brought to power by yet another “revolution.” She grew disillusioned with the cyclic carnage, social unrest, and economic instability. As I will show, Francisca Martinoff criticized the revolutionary rhetoric that relied on patriotism and transcendence inasmuch as this rhetoric relegated the civilian and military bodies to the disposable. Even though Emma is euryphagous and anything goes that promises to get her high, I suspect that should she have lived during the French revolution, she would have felt bored rather than excited over the prospect of fighting on the barricades. In a rather classed way, Francasci reinstated the body’s value through excessive medication and monetary investment in the body’s health. Yet, her protagonist Francisca Martinoff cannot relieve her censored body “of itself” if not through poison. What interests me in this conservative historical milieu then is that Francasci advocated for self-medication and reclaimed pharmacy for women while the men-dominated science campaigned in favour of public hygiene and increased drug regulation.

Even though, to the best of my knowledge, Francasci did not specify whether she read Madame Bovary, it appears that by 1891 she had not. At least when Meriño touched on the correspondence between Flaubert and George Sand, she admitted enjoying George Sand’s work albeit she disapproved of the writer’s behaviour “as a woman”: “la popular y fecunda escritora francesa me agradaba por muchas de sus obras que conocía, pero que como mujer la interpretaba yo muy mal; que no la entendía” (232). That Francasci failed to mention the no less scandalous Flaubert I interpret as her probable ignorance of his texts and persona. However, it is likely she ended up reading Madame Bovary. The Flaubert-Sand letters must have aroused Francasci’s curiosity. As a proprietor of the shop “Nueva Feria” she enjoyed rather easy access to books. What is more, her next novel Francisca Martinoff included elements of realism and the tabooed topic of female suicide by poisoning.27

The messages between Flaubert and George Sand set the tone for Francasci’s feverish correspondence with Meriño. She had exchanged some isolated notes with Meriño before and he even wrote her one letter that she described as “una pequeña joya literaria” (223). However, Francasci’s affection for Meriño changed in quality after he came up with the literary model of Flaubert-Sand and suggested her keeping a diary during his short trip to the Cibao region. Why was this literary precedent necessary?28 Despite being ordained, Meriño had three children. When Francasci was composing her memoir, Meriño’s son Fernando Alberto Defilló graduated as a medical doctor and went to Paris to
Francasci lived in a culture fed by rumours, in which married woman had to be vigilant over insinuations about adultery.

Francasci returned to the prestigious and legitimizing precedent of Flaubert and George Sand after Meriño’s eighteenth letter in which, she was afraid, the reader might sense flirting. Meriño corresponded on his way to the Vatican from New York which he qualified as “un abismo de ruidos incesantes que me tienen aturdido y, por supuesto, los nervios excitados a causa de la irritación” (250). The sense of being stunned and overstimulated contributed perhaps to Meriño’s neglect in his word choice. Their common friend brought him Francasci’s letter and photo aboard so that she could accompany him “en espíritu y en imagen” (250). Meriño enjoyed the photo in which he saw not a “dreamer” but the person that “remembers and thinks” (250). He recommended Francasci in his absence to write again, together with good nourishment and exercise. Francasci interrupted his letter—as she always did when double-reading becomes a remote possibility—to comment “esta humorada de niño que corrobora lo que de él decía yo en el capítulo anterior. ¡Cuán simpático le hacían las tales salidas” (250). However, a simple comment would not suffice this time because Meriño signed his letter as “su admirador y ¿diré apasionado amigo?” (250). Francasci inserted the whole paragraph analyzing and undoing the flirting effect. Interestingly, she built her defense by citing the affectionate friendship between Flaubert and George Sand:

> Si Monseñor de Meriño encontraba sabrosas las cartas de Flaubert a George Sand, por lo íntimas y afectuosas tanto como por su hermosa forma literaria, yo hallé a ésta suya para mí un sabor deleitoso. El estilo, la variedad de tonos, todo en ella me cautivó. Ese viaje descrito en algunas líneas, parecióme una maravilla. Sentíme como arrebatada con él en vuelo fantástico y vuelta a tierra, saliendo de un sueño. ¡Y luego esos chistes!” (251)

Interestingly, Francasci did not attempt to dissimulate the affective aspect of the letter; instead she decided to do interpretative labour on readers’ behalf, perhaps hoping to cut short any unwanted gossip. To explain and acquit such apparently scandalous details as her photograph in Meriño’s “bulto de escribir” (250), there was the prestigious European antecedent of George Sand’s portrait in Flaubert’s study room (Flaubert and Sand 6). Francasci rationalized all Meriño’s erotically charged double-meanings. She must have anticipated that otherwise every reticence in her narrative would have been
misinterpreted on her behalf. Missing no single textual crease, Francasci controlled and, I suspect, censored her autobiographical writing.

Even being deeply depressed, Francasci did not dare seek help from her family and friends, and therapeutic writing seemed to be the only viable option against her distress. At the beginning of *Monseñor de Meriño*, the reader encounters the autobiographical narrator on the “edge of her grave” (213). We have already seen a similar scenario of “moral crisis” in Hostos when he turned away from a career in law, grew disenchanted with fictional writing, and started his narco-analysis to stimulate himself and others to decolonize. Multiple “moral crises” punctuated Francasci’s life too:

“Atravesaba yo una de esas crisis morales que tantas veces, en el curso de mi vida, me han llevado casi al borde de la tumba; de tal modo me abaten, de tal modo consumen mis fuerzas, a tal extremo quebrantan todas mis vitales energías” (213). But since the crisis that opens the narration is particularly intense, this time Francasci invented an original remedy. The abyss of black melancholy and madness draws her in while “[v]eleidades de suicidio” (213) cross her mind. Despite suicide considered taboo by the church, the narrator dodges all gravity as she speaks of her condition. She frames suicide within her “fickle whims” and conceives “varios proyectos de súbita y voluntaria desaparición…” (213). Thus, the narrator’s language betrays the turn-of-the-century sensibility when the language delicately touched on the forbidden and teased the awe-inspiring. In addition, her family, whose constant vigilance provoked her crisis in the first place, attempt to take care of her.

What Pamela Thurschwell said elsewhere about female hysteria is applicable to Francasci’s condition. Thurschwell argues that “Hysteria was a double-edged sword for the nineteenth-century woman patient; on the one hand, illness promised both freedom and attention that was not usually hers for the asking. On the other hand, it increased her dependence, made her a slave to doctors and cures, and made her suspect as a malingerer” (18). Francasci’s family consulted several doctors, yet those could not agree on the accurate diagnosis.

Doctors did not follow standardized treatment protocols at the time. Their prescriptions often contradicted each other, which increased disorientation for the patient. Francasci described her illness as anemia, melancholy, “cansancio de la vida,” sadness, and madness. That anemia figures among the diagnoses indicates that Gabriel Andral’s pathology had replaced François-Joseph-Victor Broussais’s theories about insanity. Moscoso Puello considered Andral one of the most influential medical authors
in the Dominican Republic in the second half of the nineteenth century (vol. 5 29). In short, Broussais believed that general inflammation or irritation originated in the gastrointestinal tract and then was carried in the blood throughout the whole body, including the brain. He considered all illness “sthenic,” that is feverish, too active, overstimulated. By his logic, insanity was a by-product of this general body irritation. Broussais’s treatment protocols consisted of nutrition regulation, bloodletting by leeches, and sedatives. Contrarily, Andral concentrated on local lesions and—interested as he was in blood chemistry—distinguished between hypernemia and anemia. Roger Teyssou explains the difference between the two doctors: Broussais “observait par le gros bout de la lorgnette, et ne voyait partout que l’inflammation. L’autre [Andral] par l’oculaire, démarche plus pragmatique, qui lui permettait de dire que, si processus fébrile se traduisait par des manifestations générales, il n’en restait pas moins qu’il devait correspondre à des affections locales, siégeant dans les liquides ou les solides, et succédant à une lésion de nature et de siège inconnus” (13). Andral viewed the nervous system as a semi-independent structural unit, which is why he looked for organic lesions of the brain and spinal cord. The treatment for the anemic consisted of nutrition regulation and tonics, and aimed at fortifying the weakened and depressed organism. Although the Andral inspired therapy defined Francasci’s medication, sedatives continued to be used as well—“reconstituyentes, calmantes y otras drogas” (213). Tonics and sedatives neutralized one another’s actions. Additionally, Francasci was advised “El ejercicio en la mañana, los baños de mar, una larga temporada en el campo” (213), none of which she followed since they all required volition, precisely of which this woman fell short.

Ailing and drugged, Francasci hallucinated: “Después de una gran excitación mental que me dejara el cerebro excesivamente fatigado, y todo el cuerpo sin fuerzas, caí en un estado de sopor profundo. Y soñé que…” (214). However, her hallucination neither distracts her from “truth” nor introduces the regime of a simulacrum. Rather, the Francasci’s dreamlike vision grasps her actual condition. Amidst her everyday dutiful life, she sees herself surrounded by some mystical “tinieblas” that obscure the picture. Then suddenly there appears “una luz sobrenatural iluminando un abismo espantoso, en el cual, por manos invisibles, fui precipitada repentinamente, sin que yo me diera cuenta de ello” (214). The more effort Francasci makes not to sink into the abyss, the more surely she descends into its depth. Her abyss resembles a swampy soil; more ontological than geologically plausible since the narrator travels from its edge—“borde de la tumba”—to the inside of the bottomless chasm that she endlessly traverses. Again, the narrator’s narcotic-oneiric illumination rather than
dissociating her from knowledge, does quite the opposite: “Miré a mi alrededor y comprendí que había soñado. Entonces reflexioné sobre mi sueño…” (214). Now, unlike her incompetent—or at least puzzled doctors—Francasci invents a potent therapy.

**Professional Competition between Pharmacy and the Confessional**

Francasci’s writing exemplified the relentless competition between pharmacy and the confessional perhaps even better than Flaubert’s. In *Madame Bovary*, religion resembles an obsolete and inadequate attribute of sublimation culture. Melancholia creeps over Emma’s father, Monsieur Rouault, when his house is about to be deserted again after his daughter’s wedding. Emma’s departure vaguely reminds him of his son’s loss. Ronell contends that the novel relates Monsieur Rouault’s melancholia to the opiate vapours—for melancholia operates a dispersion of mind not unlike the opiate—and to yet another deserted house, that of “depressed spirits, the church” (Ronell 129). Flaubert wrote that when Monsieur Rouault’s mind “was still beclouded by the vapors of the feast, he had a momentary impulse to head toward the church” (30). Yet, Monsieur Rouault “decides against visiting” (Ronell 129); churches and priests still formed part of the everyday landscape, though they seemed to be dissolving along with the withering god. If Nietzsche interpreted God as a cadaverous presence—“God is dead,” echoed Zarathustra—in Flaubert, religion had been gradually fading away since more potent hallucinogens stepped in.32 Flaubert captured the moment when religion was losing monopoly over transcendence and the latter was being redefined through healthcare, the illicit drug market, and literature. Emma does not despise religion, but its hit proves to be too weak. Not so for the Dominican author and her self-medicating protagonists.

Francasci merged pharmacy and the confessional under the rubric of therapy. She realised that “material remedies” were insufficient because her malady was moral in nature. Therefore, she required a “moral”/spiritual remedy (214). She turned to religion and chose the archbishop of Santo Domingo as her confessor. However, Francasci had a Sephardic background and—although raised Catholic—was unlikely to be extremely devoted. She desired recognition through her friendship with Meriño instead: “¡Vivía yo tan retraída! ¡Condenada a la oscuridad por mi modestísima posición y recluida en mi casa casi siempre por mi precario estado de salud! Temía parecer demasiado humilde y sobre todo muy insignificante al gran mitrado” (216). Francasci allegedly hoped that her confession would ease her crisis, yet she confessed nothing. Had she had some “dirty little secrets” to disclose, Meriño did not
learn them: “Callé fatigada. Y, extenuada por mi esfuerzo nervioso, me dejé caer sobre las almohadas del respaldo del sillón. / Monseñor de Meriño habló entonces. Díjome cosas dulcísimas que fueron bálsamo para las heridas crueles de mi espíritu. / Hija mía: la he escuchado. Es usted muy noble. Es usted pura” (219).33 Meriño jokes that he will cure her as Jesus Christ’s representative (218), but Francasci suspects that the healing will rather be due to the therapeutic properties of religion, specifically ecstasy which relieves the self of itself. Meriño’s words of approval act like balsam on Francasci’s wounded spirit. Balsam is an interesting metaphor within the nineteenth century imagination. It demonstrates that the divide between body and soul was decreasing. Balsam was applied as an ointment to the wound and soothed the body like an—as aromatic and resinous—incense soothed the soul.34 Now, “soul” was already in a tight, almost functional correlation with the body if balsam pharmacodynamics also applied to spiritual wounds.

Supposedly, Meriño suggested that Francasci wrote as an anti-depressant exercise: “Lo que se proponía Monseñor era encontrar un recurso contra mi tristeza; proporcionarme una distracción poderosa, por medio de un trabajo que me interesara el espíritu y le absorbiera, si era posible” (224). Even if Francasci herself did not invent writing therapy, she quickly picked up Meriño’s advice. Francasci might not have disclosed anything “confessable” about herself, but once she finished she felt exhausted as if having done a great deal of work. Apparently, it cost her “nervous effort,” yet the reader is not sure what type of work the narrator means. Might she have attempted to articulate that sense of herself split in between her household duties and her calling to writing, without naming the latter? We remember that Francasci probably cheated when she made Meriño responsible for her first writing exercise. Did she not assure that she wrote her first novel as an adolescent and later destroyed the text to preserve her reputation as an elite woman? I argue that Francasci herself insinuated the treatment she needed to Meriño. When shortly after Meriño informed Francasci that he was leaving for the Cibao region for about a month, Francasci met the news with such anguish that Meriño is reported to have asked her to keep a diary. She would record all her thoughts and impressions sincerely, as if she were talking to Meriño through this medium: “Temo que recaiga usted en sus tristezas, porque sé que no está usted curada de ellas . . . he buscado y creo haber encontrado un medio de distraerla. Escuche usted bien. Pues bueno: abra para mí solo, una especie de Diario que usted redactará con toda sinceridad de mujer, cada día me dirá usted en él sus impresiones, lo que le ocurra; hablará usted conmigo” (223).
Although Francasci carries the narration in all instances, I suspect that here she orchestrated Meriño’s phrasing more than usual; she desired her poetic license to write after all.

Regardless, Meriño recommended Francasci a diary as a women’s medium (“Diario que usted redactará con toda sinceridad de mujer”) and as a supporting therapy to prevent relapse into “her sorrows.” He meant the diary to serve as a vent out of Francasci’s home seclusion and to allow her to “write her own self” at large. Instead, Francasci heard (or imagined having heard) a Diary with a capital letter, a literary genre:

cuando escribo, salgo un poco de mí misma. Me identifico con el personaje que quiero retratar o crear y me olvido de mí. En los momentos actuales, desde hace casi un mes que estoy redactando en ratos desocupados estas memorias, vivo, por decirlo así, con Monseñor de Meriño presente; tengo su retrato a la vista y al escribir lo contemplo. Paréceme que en realidad veo a mi verdadero amigo; que lo estoy oyendo; que le hablo y que él me escucha con atención afectuosa: con bondadoso interés. Por eso me he extendido tanto hablando aquí de mí, a pesar mío, contra mi propio querer, más dominada por mis recuerdos tan gratos y tan tristes al mismo tiempo. (224)

Francasci wished to forget and exit herself; to lapse into an altered dozing state of mind and to make the surrounding walls recede. She reinvented Meriño in her autobiographical writing so that her dead friend—now her literary character—precipitated Francasci beside him into a disembodying experience of ecstasy. When writing, Francasci hallucinated. The hallucination dodged her volition: “a pesar mío,” “contra mi propio querer,” “dominada,” she surrendered to writing. Francasci intended to recreate historical truth about her mentor, but her writing got out of hand: “Mi memoria me representa tan fielmente los detalles minuciosos que he dado sobre mis primeras entrevistas con Monseñor, que la pluma ha corrido, ha corrido; y no he sabido detenerla” (224). However, she intuited that by chronicling the giddy minutiae of her chatter and correspondence with Meriño, she performed her professional identity.

Francasci experienced a sense of disorientation amid the richness of hallucinogenic detail. Writing turned out to be simultaneously therapeutic and addictive: “Mis fuerzas decaían a cada rato. Si escribía era por distraerme, ya lo he dicho, como otros fuman opio o se emborrachan. Pero solamente me ejercitaba en obras fáciles, no en trabajos complicados como el que deseaba yo realizar; en estilo
elegante; en forma correcta, y lleno de interés, en todo digno de aquel a quien yo lo dedicaba” (280-281). What started as a promise of relief and cure proved to be ineffective, even harmful. Francasci reinforced the figure of “bad” drug though the double figure of “bad” writing. She abandoned the ideal of complex structure, elegant style, and well-defined form. Francasci gave up on producing a writing sample “of interest” that her solemn object deserved and succumbed to the frivolous writing of her fantasies.

The reader can observe the growing gendered meaning of Francasci’s self-devaluation. The narrative conveys her sense of being overwhelmed by contradictory expectations of her literary critics. On the one hand, the Puerto Rican Ramón Marín Solá praised Francasci for complying with the moral and book market demand. In his opinion, Francasci embraced the aesthetics of Shakespeare, Germaine de Staël, and Émile Zola, yet “La joven más angelical y púdica lo [el libro Madre culpable] devorará sin que sus mejillas de rosa se enrojezcan” (Francasci Monseñor 256). Meriño, for his part, wished that Francasci gained prestige for Dominican literature on the international arena. To begin with, he tolerated her excessive sensibility if someone was willing to buy it: “Estas páginas que ha escrito, lágrimas de su corazón; gemidos dolorosísimos de su alma acongojada, son perlas de rico valor, que darán realce a nuestra desmedrada literatura nacional” (278). With time, Meriño toughened his aesthetic criteria and challenged Francasci to create “[e]sa obra enteramente nacional” (280). It was no longer enough to be Dominican to write Dominican literature. “National literature” demanded national topics and settings. The titles of the books that Francasci planned to write illustrate my point. While she wanted to author Psicología femenina and Mercedes, Meriño imagined her scribbling Escenas de la vida en Santo Domingo. Initially, Francasci was proud that Meriño expected her to write like other men authors: “Capítulo por capítulo estaba ya creado en mi imaginación el libro que según mi ilustre amigo debía ser el broche de oro que cerrara mi carrera literaria. Ardía yo en deseos de escribirla, por complacer a mi bondadoso mentor” (280). However, the costumbrist tradition required knowledge of the country history, laws, customs, different social classes, races, and regions; none of which Francasci had: “ni una línea tracé de ella [de la novela] esperando a hacer algo magno, quería documentarme bien, hasta viajar en la república; ponermé más en contacto con el pueblo; hacer brotar la inspiración por medio de impresiones sentidas; ¡vivir mi obra, en fin! Y el resultado de mis pretensiones fue que nada pude llevar acabo, disgustando a Monseñor” (280). In this way, the confessional pretended to repress Francasci’s writing project at some point.
To assure her spiritual independence, Francasci counterpoised Meriño with Emiliano Tejera, a pharmacist. Tejera entered the narration at the beginning of the second part, right before Francasci reproduced Meriño’s first letter. She admitted that she altered “la verdad histórica” claiming that Meriño’s spiritual guidance restored her health. In reality, she continued suffering from “una melancolía que me hacía encontrar el cielo nublado, el sol pálido, el ambiente poco agradable, la vida sin aliciente alguno” (225). In addition to being depressed, Francasci had an unspecified “afección bronquial que amenazó castigar mis pulmones siempre delicados” (225). Hypochondriac as she was and afraid of TB, Francasci sought assistance, specifically curious about the new medical knowledge taught at the Hospital Militar and Instituto Profesional. Her brother Eugenio, whom she characterized as “aficionado al arte de Esculapio” and “galeno en la familia,” practiced the old way to treat diseases (225). He considered his sister, though, “enferma de un género distinto a los que él curaba,” and so he invited Tejera to examine her. Francasci addressed Tejera exclusively as “médico,” and expected him to treat her “moral” and physical disorders. Even if not Francasci herself, her brother must have known that Tejera was a pharmacist and thus not authorized to medicate his clients. Yet, Eugenio de Marchena himself gave health advice, at least to his family members, even though he had no medical degree. Of course, folk medicine was active in the Dominican Republic. What is interesting still is that educated men members of the family replaced or supplemented the curanderos in elite social circles and recycled the outdated medical knowledge as home remedies. Meanwhile the new medical knowledge enjoyed ample trust, even if coming from a pharmacist.

In some sense, Tejera was a charlatan medical doctor and a charlatan literato. However, the precarity of his professional status benefited Francasci since now she was in a position to overwrite medical and clerical authorities. Pedro Henríquez Ureña described Tejera as anachronistic: “uno de esos hombres de ciencia que se daban en la América española del siglo XIX y que de verdad pertenecían al siglo XVIII” (“Prólogo” v). He interpreted that Tejera’s pharmacy did not fit into modernity: “En Santo Domingo, encerrado en su arcaica botica de la Calle del Conde de Peñalba, entre los morteros de piedra y los potes de porcelana con palmeras pintadas, amasó conocimientos de botánica y de farmacopea, de derecho y de historia, de lenguas clásicas y de literatura moderna. Escribía admirablemente, pero no tenía aficiones ni menos vanidad de escritor; escribía por deber” (“Prólogo” v). The pharmacy development was vertiginous; what dazzled the minds barely in the 1890s grew disproportionately old, almost antiquarian by the 1950s. The contemporary public considered
Tejera a wise, comprehensively well-educated man, albeit of an “eccentric and capricious” type (Francasci Monseñor 226). Like Homais, Tejera had to justify his lack of license and to exceed the prototypical medical doctor: a university graduate both of liberal arts and medical school. This kind was disappearing from the national reality in which most doctors were domestic graduates who were trained in their practical field of expertise, but did not necessarily demonstrate a high level of general erudition. Tejera looked obsolete and bizarre, yet he monetarized his odds to earn his living. Francasci turned his eccentricity to her advantage. Her sense of imposture decreased when, for instance, she caught the pharmacist say that he believed in the transmigration of souls (227). Francasci also disputed the meaning of his near-sightedness. Tejera claimed that because he had impaired vision and saw Francasci “como al través de un velo transparente,” he saw her soul all the better (227). Yet Francasci realized that Tejera had to dissimulate his disability because he feared losing his credibility as a “physician” and a politician. However, Tejera’s biggest advantage in Francasci’s eyes was his rivalry with Meriño. Since she inherited the Romantic poetics of contrast, Francasci aptly transformed their personal clashes into a structural antagonism: “Así recomendado, entró, como si dijéramos, en mi intimidad, el que debía ser, aunque en orden muy distinto, el émulo en mi amistad de Monseñor de Meriño” (226). Tejera and Meriño migrated into Francisca Martinoff, transfigured into four doctors and the canon, and played out a similar rivalry drama there.

Revolution and Religion in the Medicalized Society: Francisca Martinoff

Although Francisca Martinoff (1901) takes place in 1893 amid an unspecified “pobre ciudad de segundo orden de una república de la América del Sur” (20), the reader can identify in the setting social and political challenges specific to the Dominican Republic of the period. As we have seen, Francasci’s censored her writing and this partially determined such a vague location. On the other hand, the author worried about continental Latin American history and thought of the novel’s repercussions for a wider audience. After all, such canonic dictator novels of the 20th century as Ramón del Valle-Inclán’s Tirano Banderas, Miguel Ángel Asturias’s El Señor Presidente, Alejo Carpentier’s El recurso del método, and Gabriel García Márquez’s El otoño del patriarca would all assemble their fictional dictators from a number of historical sources. Vallejo contends that Francasci set the time of the action back to 1893 because, had the author placed the action after the law of divorce was adopted in 1897, the love triangle composed of a married couple and their family doctor would lose its plausibility (274). However, I suspect that Francasci made her choice of time-space for the
novel because she wished to critique the Dominican caudillo revolutions and the socio-political prestige of medicine, both phenomena that significantly evolved around the beginning of the twentieth century. Incidentally, she claimed the significance of her interpretation for similar political processes on the continent.

Caudillo revolutions politically defined the second half of the nineteenth century in the Dominican Republic. Frank Moya Pons calculated that, since the end of the Restoration War from Spain in 1865 until 1879 when the liberal Azul Party came to power, the country suffered “more than 50 uprisings and revolts resulting in some 21 changes in government” (222). After the long-time dictator—but once member of the Azules—Ulises Heureaux was assassinated two decades later in 1899, the revolutions were losing their popular basis and were increasingly orchestrated by the United States. Even though many historians, among them Moya Pons and Cassá, either avoid the term revolution or place it in quotation marks, I prefer using this term, albeit critically, to follow Francasci’s own word choice and that of the Dominican nineteenth century that lived in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution and pictured Dominican local conflicts amid the sublime universal imagery. This created some comic effects such as when Emiliano Tejera notoriously called the peasant revolutionary and the pig—synecdoche for the free-range livestock—two major public enemies (“Public enemies” 201).

In personal terms, the beginning of the new century marked Francasci’s progressive political disenfranchisement and social alienation. In Monseñor de Meriño Francasci would enthuse herself with politics one last time and back the quasi liberal politician Horacio Vásquez (ch. 48 & 54-59). However, Francisca Martinoff is a novel of decadence in which the aging, childless, refined White woman is unable to catch up with her time. What she is and stands for define the protagonist no more than what she wishes she were but is not. A joyful, exuberant young morenilla that lives next door embodies the modernity that the author abhorred as soul- and tasteless. The white skin colour is a mandatory attribute of beauty and aristocracy “of the soul” in the text, which reveals Francasci’s normalized racism. What is interesting, then, is that Francisca Martinoff envies her mixed-race neighbour. Carmela faces many adverse circumstances: Carmela’s mother bans her from schooling, but regularly takes her to the trashy municipal theatre; other girls make fun of her ignorance; and she aspires to art but lacks talent. Her presuming fiancé Pepe Tavares betrays her with a poetess and columnist Horacina. Yet, unlike Francisca Martinoff, Carmela is physically developed and healthy. Neither does she live a
secluded, elite-woman’s life; she roams the city streets freely. When betrayed, she easily finds a new, this time hard-working fiancé. Mazed in moral impasses, Francisca Martinoff envies Carmela because the latter epitomizes a new woman that—although stigmatized as superficial, immoral, and simply dumb—follows her desires and speaks her mind.

If Carmela is a caricature of a commoner, her fiancé and his new sweetheart represent a critique of the Dominican liberal elites. Martínez-Vergne analyzes the formation of the Dominican moral vanguard drawing on Daniel Rodgers’s understanding of economic liberalism. Rodgers argues that at the base of economic liberalism there was “an ethos of the freely acting self”: “If the freely chosen act was the moral act, then the realm of ‘free’ trade and exchange held more than economic utility; it was the realm of moral growth” (79). Thus, economic liberalism determined a system of values when “educated” decisions that “contributed to the collective well-being” were “charged with moral worth” (Martínez-Vergne 50). By contrast, the populations that could not or, I add, would not bother to access education were deemed unable of such informed decisions and thus “unfit for participatory government” (Martínez-Vergne 50). When the revolution triumphs, everyone felicitates Francisca Martinoff, “conociendo su liberalismo” (130). Yet her liberalism is idealistic: in favour of science, rights for women, economic prosperity, and political stability, while the liberals that come to power pursue personal gains, even though they dress them up in populist rhetoric. In this sense, they are not unlike Pepe, “un mozuelo de quince años … raquítico e imberbe aún, con pretensiones de hombre, y de hombre grande; ¡ya escéptico en amor, mezclado en política, escritor y periodista, filósofo y … todo!” (34-35). Even Horacina’s “confusing” verses, her skinny, tall figure and big eyes, “como torcidos,” only mimic the fin-de-siècle aesthetics of disproportion. Instead the crassness of Horacina’s behaviour shines through as she does not respect Carmela’s private correspondence and ridicules the uneducated girl’s style and orthography. The husk of solemn rhetoric falls away to reveal her “true,” vulgar identity as Josefa Rincón (106-108). In this sense, Francasci’s writing constitutes a moral rearguard that criticized the liberal methods.

Liberals downgraded the uneducated to the status of “masses” and then claimed that the masses were easily manipulated and duped into the next meaningless bloodshed and change of government. The rendering of Carmela illustrates that Francasci did not have a high opinion of the people either and racialized her compatriots uncritically. Yet she disagreed with Tejera; the peasant revolutionary was not to blame for the political chaos since “moral” citizens succumbed to the logic of revolution as
readily. If for Francisco Gregorio Billini revolutions were incited by Rojos and brought down the legitimate government, Francasci nuanced that liberals sounded rational and upright on the public arena but tumbled down—either stupefied by the political sublime or transported by passion—in the private domain.

Martínez-Vergne lists the absence of “effective means to channel differences of opinion” (33) as one of the main concerns that dominated the intellectual climate in 1880-1916. She specifies that Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal “placed the Dominican Republic in the same category as other Latin American countries whose citizens believed that there was no change possible except through violent means” (35). The civil society was incipient and failed to control state politics. Martínez-Vergne points out that “passion” served as “a code word for disorder and violence” (36). By the time Francisca solicits medical assistance from Pablo Ferreti, she has turned down two physicians, among them the liberal doctor Linares, because they forget “sus deberes profesionales y aún la honradez” (44). Stylish, educated, and well-travelled, doctor Linares had earned Francisca’s esteem. He spent hours talking to her; not only could he discuss any scientific topic with his patient but listened to her “disertando sobre las materias que ella conocía mejor” (111). He is delicate enough to avoid Francisca once he realizes his courtship causes her distress. Instead, he directs “toda su voluntad en dominarse, en vencer toda aquella atracción tan poderosa, alejándose voluntariamente de ella y convirtiendo sus pensamientos a otro ideal. La política lo había absorbido. Francisca no tenía ya nada que temer de él” (112). It is noteworthy that doctor Linares is a synecdoche of the liberal in the city of B*, where people say “Es un doctor Linares” if someone imitates “su absoluta corrección en el traje y en las maneras, en el hablar, en el andar, en todo” (111). Through sublimation, doctor Linares deflects his unfulfilled desires into politics. Consequently, his politics—representative of liberal politics in the novel—verges on passion. Since there is no legitimate means to hold president Sandoval in check, doctor Linares plots a revolution against the dictator. He does not question his methods and acts out of passion.

The reader anticipates that the revolution will fail its purpose as a fake revolution precedes the actual revolution. The fake revolution starts when the governor learns about a planned demonstration and arms his soldiers to elude protests. As guns are being handed over, a soldier inadvertently fires his and kills another soldier. This triggers a panic because people think that one more revolution has begun and, accustomed as they are, reach for their own weapons (122). There is no bloodshed during the actual revolution since doctor Linares convinced all chiefs of the army to join him.
Francasci presents the revolution as a series of repetitions void of any constructive impulse and mobilization “from below.” The mob greets doctor Linares and general Padilla as they enter the capital while Sandoval retreats. Rather than initiating and participating in the revolution, the urban crowd echo the *vivas* shouted out by “some” while provinces duplicate the uproar produced in the capital: “Estos gritos se repetían en todos los ámbitos de la república algunos días después, lanzados doquier con igual entusiasmo, con la misma frenética alegría. ¡Al oírlos hubiera podido creerse que un pueblo viril despertaba, consciente de sus derechos, digno, sediento de su libertad!” (127). The people fail to identify the revolution with a “new beginning”—for how many had there been by then?—skip work, and await government payback for their loyalty: “Vitorear al nuevo Gobierno era un pretexto para no trabajar y daba derecho a la recompensa de los llamados liberales” (147). Even Carmela—the vulgar imitator par excellence—follows the general exhilaration and adds the national hymn to her repertoire of operettas: “La animación llegaba a su colmo … el himno nacional se oía por todas partes. Carmela lo tocaba, haciendo alternar con sus canciones favoritas” (129). The victory initiates a series of celebrations and, as those come to an end, the cycle closes. Everything returns to the initial position: Padilla becomes another dictator and Sandoval raises “otra vez la cabeza” (148).

The regressive usurpation of power happens on the sly while military parades, overblown rhetoric, and the persona of the charismatic general overexcite the “masses.” This overexcitement desensitizes people to logic/“truth,” allowing Padilla to redefine the language—not unlike in the twentieth century genre of dystopia—and to impersonate a liberal revolutionary. After all, Padilla is “rico, espléndido y de atractivos personales por su elocuencia fácil y arrebatadora” (128-129). The logic of insurgency reproduces itself on the other side. The same chapter that opened with “long live the revolution” closes as exalted Ángel returns home from “un meeting donde se había hablado claramente contra el nuevo Gobierno” (130). The part doctor Linares and canon L* play in the uprising consists of winning over the elites.

The doctor and the cleric fabricate rhetorical/“idealistic” arguments that focus on restoring the well-being of the body politic just as they restore the physical and spiritual well-being of their patients and church members. Sandoval’s spies cannot catch doctor Linares because the military leaders whose cooperation he gains for the revolution are literally his patients. Now, when the military win over the common people, they act not unlike pharmacists. If the doctors were suspected of quackery at the time, the pharmacists, who dosed, mixed up chemical substances, and were more engaged in marketing and
selling their products, epitomized the imposter.47 The military oversimplify the educated rhetorical arguments, remove any ambiguity, and repeat the most potent fragments.

The action of the redefined language on the body is comparable to that of the drug in that they affect reasoning. Intriguingly, both religion and revolution turn out to be “the opium of the people” in the novel. Through this metaphor, Marx notoriously criticized religion for decreasing the pain at the cost of beclouding the mind of the people. However, the metaphor did not imply that he denounced psychoactive agents per se. Early Marx in “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” envisioned “a utopian dream for Germany”: a “radical revolution or universal human emancipation” instead of “the partial merely political revolution” that “leaves the pillars of the building standing” (253).48 Since the demolition of social structures involved sacrifice and inevitably hurt some interests, Marx specified that “one particular class undertakes from its particular situation the universal emancipation of society” (254). To achieve this goal, that class had to secure solidarity with all of civil society:

No class of civil society can play this role without awakening a moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses; a moment in which this class fraternizes and fuses with society in general, becomes identified with it and is experienced and acknowledged as its universal representative; a moment in which its claims and rights are truly the rights and claims of society itself and in which it is in reality the heart and head of society. (254)

Therefore, one class would arouse enthusiasm “in itself”—for to pull the pillars down required immense labour and perhaps human casualties—and next spread the enthusiasm into the “masses.” Under exposure to this enthusiasm, this class would merge with all of society, which would substitute general interests for the interests of this class. A few pages before the cited passage and one paragraph above the statement that religion is “the opium of the people” (244), Marx described religion as “the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d’honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement and its universal basis of consolation and justification … The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion” (244). Whereas religion was the enthusiasm of the ancien regime in Marx’s account, the French managed to displace this enthusiasm onto the revolution.

However, the German Reformation deprived religion of its sensuousness and made Germans too sober
(251-252). Consequently, the necessary switch from one psychoactive agent to another seemed improbable. Revolution—either partial or radical—was no means to satisfy immediate material needs and required a pharmaco-moment, the affirmative negation of the French revolution—“I am nothing and I should be everything” (254). Since Germans were too moderate—and many too well-off—to enthuse themselves with theories, Marx fantasized that there was one class impoverished to the point it was no longer German. The proletariat supposedly lacked everything, including national culture. Therefore, this class was simply human and its interests were simply human interests (256-257). Basically, Marx’s formula proved to be strong enough to incite enthusiasm across classes and nations.

By contrast, the turn-of-the-century Dominican Republic experiences an excess rather than a shortage of enthusiasm in the novel. In the public domain, the victory celebration intoxicates the people: “En B* el entusiasmo parecía universal. Durante un mes no cesaron los festejos públicos, los bailes oficiales, los banquets, los meetings populares, soirées particulares, la música por las calles, los gritos, los vivas, a imitación de C* la verdadera capital. Allí llegaban al delirio las demostraciones de contento” (128). Unlike Bonó, Francasci included the elites in the frenzy of celebration. While the hustle distracts the crowd, the elites fail to notice until Padilla has become a new idol: “El pueblo admiraba a Padilla, rendíale culto, principiaba a adorarlo. El aura popular, ¿no desvanecería el antes tan liberal, tan abnegado caudillo? Eso era lo que se preguntaban los que veían aquella popularidad levantándose y crecer” (129). In the private domain, Francisca’s household is impregnated with narcotic fumes. Their pharmacodynamics leave the residents either ecstatic or depressed. However, in the aftermath of the revolution Francisca—already heavy on drug culture—is not affected by the “enthusiasm” as badly as her soberer compatriots. Rather than alienating Francisca from “reality”—and we have seen a similar effect on Emma Bovary—her addictions give her a critical edge to interpret the “naked,” unadorned “truth” (99).

Quite literally, Francisca wakes up in chapter four to find her “estancia” taken over by flowers: “sobre las mesas, en los rincones, todo eran flores vistosas. Respirábase allí un aire de fiesta discreta que hacía soñar con las felicidades íntimas” (33). The expressions “fiesta discreta” and “felicidades íntimas” indicate that narcotics trigger inner explorations and dreams. The eye catches the bright colours of the flowers but they also operate in the invisible register beneath and beyond the surface. Their aroma alters perception: “En medio de aquella luz tamizada y diáfana, de aquellas flores matizadas y fragantes, rodeada de aquel ambiente perfumado, aparecía ella esa mañana, más joven, más
ideal que nunca” (33). Atuned to her surroundings, Francisca eradiates some narcotic beauty: “siempre de blanco, con un traje de finísimo y transparente lino bordado, todo orlado en encajes” (32). Yet, a comedown follows euphoria the next day: “Francisca visiblemente fatigada, reclinaba contra el respaldo de su asiento, en postura abandonada, su cuerpo tan delicado y enhiesto como el tallo de las azucenas, que solas, entre las flores del día anterior, frescas, lozanas, abrían sus blancos pétalos y exhalaban suavísimo aroma, colocadas ante ella, sobre la mesita-velador” (43). The psychologic explanation might go that she is disappointed with her marriage, but the author privileges a pharmaco-interpretation. Francasci insists that her protagonist sits in front of the strongest bouquet of lilies and violets (33, 43). Being exposed to their scent for two days, debilitates Francisca and makes her dream of the impossible love.

Narcotic fumes leave no untouched outside. Even religion is mediated through the pharmaco-image of the Spanish variety of Catholicism—“cáriz de acíbar.” Although “acíbar”—aloe’s extract—is used figuratively meaning bitterness, the expression refers to the pharmaco-content and is less dematerialized than the English “cup [of suffering].” Even though the Bible does not mention “cáriz de acíbar,” the image is introduced early in Spanish sermons to illustrate and make more accessible to the illiterate the meaning of Jesus’s request in the garden of Gethsemane to take the cup away from him until he accepts to drink it. Similar to the common people, Francisca cannot access any transcendent reality without a medicinal mediator. Despite being surrounded by four doctors, she anticipates something more potent than the traditional Galenic medicine. Francisca has no reason to hold her doctors in high esteem since three of them have attempted to court her at some point and the fourth one, the older doctor Gutiérrez, is most absurdly addicted to card games. She requires doctors only in order to prescribe her some psychotropics which “la reanimará y la ayudará a pasar mejor el día” (60). Similarly, Francisca is skeptical of the institution of religion. She does not attend church nor follows Catholic devotions, “pero en su corazón Dios tenía un altar siempre reservado” and “con él se mantenía en constante comunión” (70). In the turn-of-the century literature, religion became one more conduit to the inner journey. At moments when depressed Francisca turns to God, she seeks either an insight into herself or an administrator of “acíbar.” When Ferreti declares her his love, for instance, desperate Francisca addresses God de profundis:

Sus fuerzas estaban agotadas. Una congoja atroz deprimía su alma. Pensaba en Ferreti. / “¡Dios mío! ¡Dios mío! exclamó desesperada, humillando hasta el suelo su pura frente, ¿esta prueba
Francisca’s *miserere* stands out due to its modernism. She begs divine intervention since her anguish of body and mind produces depression. She wishes God to decrease her dose of “acíbar”; otherwise, Francisca warns him that she is weak and might rebel eventually. Here, it is still unclear what her rebellion will look like. The melodramatic reader might think that she talks about adultery. As the novel progresses, Francisca clarifies in a “terrible trance” that she seeks death: “¡Dios, Dios bendito! exclamó en su mortal angustia, conduélete de mí: ¡Separa de mis labios este cáliz o quitame la vida! Carezco de fuerzas para soportar por más tiempo mi martirio. Dios piadoso, mándame la muerte” (74). If God ignores her pleas, she will violate doctors’ and God’s license over pharmacy and administer a lethal dose on her own.

In the meantime, Francisca attempts to heal but as she looks around for an innocent distraction or something to kill the time, she finds none. Hobbies like poetry-writing and walks out of town are all rationalized and deemed to relieve the sick. The irony is that they lose their lure in Francisca’s eyes because she suspects that they are too weak a medicine while doctors—and God—keep more potent drugs out of her reach. “La literatura como los paseos eran un paliativo demasiado insignificante para su mal” (115), asserts the author who explored writing therapy on the pages of her diary. This seeming contradiction disappears once we compare how Francasci conceptualized writing in *Francisca Martinoff* versus *Monseñor de Meriño*. On the one hand, writing is medicalized and hence commodified. This is why writing therapy turns out to be a fallacy in *Francisca Martinoff*. On the other hand, non-writing leads to mental and physical disorders in *Monseñor de Meriño* after Francasci suppresses her calling to write to comply with the gendered norms. Once she dares to express herself, her singular writing is infinitely endangered with failure. Healing is not guaranteed and literally depends on specific words put side by side, the unraveling of Francasci’s unique traumas and fantasies. It is the labour of a pharmacist composing her own medication rather than of a psychologist.
Literature, walks, daydreaming, and politics allow Francisca “salir de sí misma” (98) but their palliative effect is temporary. Coming back to one’s senses is even more painful after such excursions: “Francisca abrió los ojos, despertó. Despertó de su feliz letargo, vio la realidad, la realidad desnuda, con toda su crudeza, la triste verdad” (99). Here Francasci described the mechanism of the privileged knowledge of the addict. Through the inner journey, Francisca the addict accesses the life content that society had repressed. The turning back from her narcotic trip provides Francisca with the necessary distance to glimpse her actual circumstances, stripped down of all decor. However, there is a point of no return: “al besarla Ángel sintió un estremecimiento como si los labios de Ferreti se hubieran posado en los suyos. ¡Por una extraña fantasmagoría vio al mismo tiempo en su esposo, la persona del que amaba! ...” (99) Since “real” life is so unfulfilling and dull, another hallucination grips Francisca’s imagination.

Drugs quite literally substitute sex in the novel. Despite being married for ten years, Francisca and Ángel have not “consummated” their marriage yet. Francisca cannot recover after Ángel’s sexual assault and suspects he might be her half-brother. The reader witnesses Ángel and Francisca go to bed in chapter two. Ángel hugs his wife and asks whether she will fall asleep naturally: “¿Tienes sueño? preguntó Ángel, enlazándola con cariño. ¿Dormirás esta noche sin narcótico? / Tal vez, respondió ella con un esfuerzo. No te apures” (25). On the next page, it is Francisca’s turn to inspect her husband’s room and to offer him a potion: “Voy a acostarme. Si quieres algún cordial, avisa. / Nada Kisia, yo también tengo sueño” (26). It is noteworthy that, although the spouses reciprocate their reliance on medicine, they each give opposite meaning to drugs. While Ángel worries that his wife might abuse narcotics, Francasci demonstrates her care by reminding him of his medication. The effect of drugs on the couple is dissimilar as well. Politics and sexual desire regularly exalt Ángel; yet his passions transport him away and alienate him from “reality.” After finally having sex with Francisca, Ángel “Durante un mes vivió en tal emriaguez de gozo” that unless Eudosia “no supiera que Ángel no es muy aficionado al vino creería que siempre está borracho” (143). Hence, his hallucinations trigger neither inner exploration nor coming back to one’s senses. At some point, Ángel is stunned to the extent he ignores that all he squeezes in his arms is the “cadáver del alma de su esposa” (141).

Drug-Assisted Emancipation in Madre culpable and Francisca Martinoff
While there are so called one-book authors, Francasci reimagined one scenario—drug-assisted emancipation—across her major texts. She already sketched this scenario in *Madre culpable* which culminates with the rebellion of the otherwise obedient protagonist María. However, in Francasci’s first novel the drug-assisted emancipation functions as a narrative trick that compensates for the unexpectedness and indeed implausibility of María’s rebellion. Her brief, yet intemperate emancipation destroys her shortly. María succumbs to a disease, regrets her conduct, and redeems her outrageous act through death. Francasci reworked this scenario in *Francisca Martinoff* in which inner emancipation is the leading topic from the first to the last page. The author motivated Francisca’s suicide psychologically, aesthetically, and poetically. Yet, the outcome of her emancipation dissuades the reader from seeing that social institutions re-appropriate Francisca’s cadaver. In *Monseñor de Meriño* Francasci finally analyzed her own emancipation by means of therapeutic writing.

María, the protagonist of *Madre culpable*, grew up in a toxic environment since her mother Isabel’s instinctive reaction to patriarchy was debauchery. The privileged social mechanism to counter María’s unfortunate antecedents of birth and upbringing is marriage. Throughout the novel doctor Romero guides María so that she could marry her fiancé Alberto. Both doctor Romero and Alberto present themselves to María—of course unjustifiably—as flawless and expect absolute rectitude from her. Her Catholic religion teaches her obedience. There are no preconditions whatsoever for María’s emancipation. The girl is controlled physically and “spiritually”; she is trapped inside her house as well as within her gendered position. Her somatic body seems to be the only unoccupied territory; the last vestige of the self.

Francasci tests María’s human limits by making her suspect that Isabel and Alberto betray her in a conjoining room. María requires a boost of her willpower to gather enough courage to face the “truth” for the first time in her life. Tormented by her repressed jealousy, María “ya iba a desfallecer, cuando sus nublados ojos se fijaron en un pomo que sobre un velador había cerca de su cama” (254). The drug anticipation reactivates her mind, and María exclaims “como iluminada por súbita inspiración” (255). She breaks out of her moral maze when, as if entranced, “acercóse, cogió este y vació de él una cucharada. Con ansia febril se llevó el medicamento a los labios y lo absorbió …” (255). María embraces the drug with greed and “feverish anxiety”; as if she longed to absorb its “truth” for a long time; as if it contained any.
The pharmaco-truth she encounters is distorted and fraudulent. María glimpses an image in a mirror: her mother “estaba sentada a los pies” of Alberto “besándole las manos delirante” (256). Since the mediation persists, María cannot face the naked “truth.” She staggers and is about to collapse when she realizes that doctor Romero, Alberto, her mother, and nanny all lied to her. María has an attack of hemoptysis, this is the coughing up of blood, from which she never recovers. Francasci coded María’s death in the physiological, psychological, and political registers. It is unclear whether Maria dies because of poisoning or of a pulmonary disease to be expected in a person living in complete indoor confinement. María might have pneumonia or TB; after catching a cold, her lungs are too weak for her to go out to the patio garden (222-223). But her death is as much the effect of her disillusionment and resulting depression. She is so thoroughly indoctrinated that she will not work through her “real” situation—and no drug will do that labour for her. María’s tragedy is a sitcom. Everybody genuinely loves her, including her prostitute mother. However, María would rather believe that all her dear people are traitors and her lie-based life is worthless than unravel the meshes of misrepresentation. She welcomes death as a necessary—in her opinion—consequence of her disobedience as a daughter, a patient, and a woman.

Francisca Martinoff further dramatizes the contrast between the “truth” backed by social institutions and an intimate knowledge of the protagonist. Francisca’s relentless search for this intimate “truth” constitutes her inner emancipation. All movement in the novel happens in-between expression and repression. An outer movement of people and transport on the street prepares the reader for some sort of discussion of the incipient public sphere: “Por . . . antiguas y bastante estrechas calles veíanse circular, mezclados entre la gente del pueblo, grupos de caballeros, de señoras, de niños; coches que se cruzaban en las esquinas, hiriendo los oídos las voces de los cocheros que dirigiéndose a los imprudentes que le impedían el paso, lanzaban un ¡ohe!, ¡adelante, adelante!, chasqueando el látigo e insultando al que no les atendía . . .” (17) When people of different social groups mix together, the resulting movement is discordant and even chaotic but lively: “Sentíase, en fin, la vida …” (17). However, Francasci soon abandons this optimistic urban setting to present a series of claustrophobic mise-en-scènes inside Francisca’s cabinet. All the exterior movement is shattered while the interior movement is minimized. When Francisca’s health improves she walks around the room (54), while when her condition aggravates she does not get up (57, 63, 76). There is a sense of exaggerated movement and unsolicited intervention every time her scarce visitors enter the cabinet. Ángel regularly
squeezes Francisca, interrupting and indeed impeding her movement. The blocked expression leaks on
the level of aesthetics, of sensory contemplation. Francisca’s “declining” body contrasts with the
compactness of her image. The sicker her body, the more intense and resolute her spirit; as if some
spiritual hunger nibbled on her flesh. Francisca’s image is simultaneously passionate, yet diluted,
fabricated by the interplay of light and translucence in her overabundant white lace (18, 33-34, 43, 63,
152-153).

Francasci narrates the history of Francisca’s paradoxical pharmaco-body. As an orphaned child,
Francisca destressed from the disaffection of her new home through art: “Ella escribía y componía
desde muy tierna; se ocultaba para pensar y nada le parecía tan grato como encerrarse con un libro de
poesías o de música. La gravedad del estado de su abuelo puso término a todas sus distracciones” (26-
27). Francisca’s family made her nurse her dying grandfather for years, during which she was deprived
distractions. Pharmacy lured the most within the dull logic of the clinic. Quite hooked on raptures,
Francisca transmutes herself into a remedy for don Francisco: “¡exaltándose su imaginación con el
espectáculo de aquel sufrimiento que solo su amorosa solicitud lograba aliviar; emponzoñando su
sangre con el hálito de aquel cadáver viviente” (29). Francisca learns at an early age that the remedy—
her prayers—can turn poisonous, yet poison terminates suffering and means euthanasia: “Por la vida y
la salud de don Francisco hizo ella los votos más absurdos; ofreció su vida a Dios; sacrificar sus sueños
de gloria, su juventud, sus ilusiones de amor, todo, en cambio de la vida de su abuelo, hasta que llegó
un día en que, perdida toda esperanza de salvarle, lo vio sufrir tan desesperadamente y sin consuelo,
que le pidió a Dios su muerte ... Don Francisco murió ... (27)” As Francisca’s biological body ages and
grows thinner, itrelieves her from itself.58 Instead, there emerges a pharmaco-body: insomniac,
reclining motionless in the same chaise longue for hours, fed uniquely with delusions and pills (57).

Francisca unlocks her censored desires through this new pharmaco-body. Her aunt with a
suggestively narcotic name, Ambrosina, insinuates that Ángel might be her half-brother. Francisca
grasps at this unfounded gossip to free love from the dictate of marriage. In her narcotic stupor,
Francisca transgresses the social norms of the time when she inquires about Ferreti’s feelings towards
her. This again touches on the question of expression. Will gender emancipation, understood as a
woman’s right to speak for herself, match the revolutionary protest? Francasci’s provisional answer is
rather pessimistic. Francisca’s inner emancipation parallels the social unrest as she awakes and revisits
her gendered position. However, adverse attitudes towards her gender annihilate Francisca in the end. She is overwhelmed when Ferreti declares his love in an uncompromising manner:

Francisca no se repuso ... ¡Amarla él! ¿Podía eso ser? Y, sobre todo, ¡decírmelo! Entre todas las suposiciones que ella hiciera jamás habíasele ocurrido semejante pensamiento. Ni un instante abrigó el temor de que él se atreviera a declararla su amor. Ella creyó sencillamente, inspirada por la rectitud de su espíritu, que el resultado de la explicación pedida á Ferreti facilitaría a este una excusa; y al provocarla, se proponía discernir lo que hubiera en él de sincero o de calculado. (55)

Francisca aspired to put Ferreti in her shoes for once; to see him strayed in the thicket of words, struggling to clarify that which escapes determination. On that ground, they could have conspired to undo the discourse on gender together, word by word. However, Ferreti despises euphemisms. Francisca begs him to retreat his words and pretend nothing happened to save their close friendship, but he asserts that he won’t lie nor change:

. . . el mal que le hago es involuntario, pero no me es permitido engañarla. ¿Cambiar? Muy difícil era antes de revelarle a usted mi afecto; hoy que usted lo conoce . . . es imposible, imposible que yo cambie de manera de sentir respecto de usted. / Ferreti pronunció estas palabras con tal energía que Francisca no pudo conservar más ilusiones. Se echó hacia atrás en el asiento y reclinó la cabeza desfalleciente. (58)

Even if disinterested, Ferreti’s passion reproduces and enhances the logic of a men-dominated world. While Linares’s impeccable clothing ridicules liberalism, Ferreti dresses casually to the extent of negligence (37). He represents the new medicine conceptualized as a science rather than a craft. Therefore, he values abstract principles above happiness and compassion. However, another aunt with another narcotic name, Eudosia—a happy dose of common sense in the novel—reminds the reader that “Pablito” is an incompetent doctor as Francisca’s health worsens. Francisca closes her eyes and re-immerses in her narcotic dreams. She is aware now that Ferreti is no better than her family, Ángel, and the canon. However, she prefers her sweet erratic fantasies to the forced marriage and unwanted pregnancy.
Since medicine became a status commodity, Francisca—unlike Emma Bovary—stores a mini-pharmacy right on her console. Doctors pay daily visits to their elite clients and inundate their homes with drugs. When pregnant Francisca trips, falls, and starts bleeding, she takes an overdose of “láudano u otra sustancia análoga” to terminate her pregnancy and life (151). Francisca fakes that she mistakes laudanum for another medicine and that the resulting abortion is unpremeditated (151). However, Francisca had already warned the reader that she would rebel and would not birth her child. She acts as both a charlatan and a pharmacist knowledgeable about the abortive properties of the emetics. The anticipated rebellion develops into floods of vomit as Francisca protests the logic of sacrifice that turned the girl-child into a nurse and medicine for her dying relatives. Like the futile revolution, though, her protest degenerates into its opposite. Francisca aspires to express her repressed feelings on her deathbed. However, the narration instantly re-appropriates her dissenting “soul” upon her death:

El alma mártir de Francisca, al fin premiada, pedía a Dios el consuelo de los que sufrían: para Ángel, impresionable y enfermo, adulto, siempre niño, la salud y el pronto olvido; para Ferreti, que tan profundamente sabía amar, la resignación al dolor y la paz del alma. Implorando también de la suprema Bondad la facultad de velar sobre Pablo Ferreti, la de inspirarle así valor constante en las terribles dificultades de su vida, y en todos los instantes de esta, el deseo del bien, el culto de la ciencia, el amor de la humanidad. (156)

Who is speaking in this passage when Francisca is no more present? Once Francisca’s body ceased to resist the dominant discourse, she is made to watch her epileptic and infantile husband, Ferreti, the social order, science, and humanity from her afterlife. As her soul ascends, the uplifting sentiment grows and so does the scope of her responsibility. Earlier Francisca’s family used her to comfort her agonizing relatives, now her distilled spirit elevates all of humanity. Even though she attempted to disrupt the social order, the “operative community” urge her to foster the general welfare. By exhibiting how Francisca and her story benefit social progress despite Francisca’s non-conformism, Francasci confronted the scavenger logic of society.

Conclusions: Ambrosina against Eudosia

The two minor characters from Francisca Martinoff, Ambrosina and Eudosia, embody the relation of narcotics to “truth.” While Romantics believed that narcotic insights provide the reader with a shortcut to some esoteric knowledge, Francasci downgraded the knowledge dissociated from personal
detail. She examined the potential of pharmacy to subvert the binary opposition of true/false and hence undermine the authority of science and church. Francisca opts for hallucination instead of her “real” situation. Ambrosina’s letter gains time for Francisca who otherwise would have given in to her husband’s advances earlier. This delay allows Francisca to explore her “fractal interiorities” and set her mind free. However, the letter by and of itself does not enclose any truth. To the contrary, it is based on unfounded gossip as Ambrosina is an unreliable narrator—a distant resentful relative. Her letter nonetheless calls on Francisca to determine what happened in the past. When mesmerized Francisca researches her family history, she detects scientific clues. Ángel might have inherited her father’s epilepsy the same way she would “inherit” his suicide (75). If their father was corrupt enough to inbreed, he might have passed over his physical malady and his love madness. Narcotics paradoxically lead to French naturalism. This pinpoints that Francasci exploited modernization and the new scientific regime to counterbalance religion’s age-long monopoly over the production of sense. At the same time, she carefully distanced herself from the medical theory of hereditary degeneration by disclosing the narcotic premises of her research. Eudosia presents a different interpretation of drugs. Every time Francisca is carried away by her dreams about Ferreti, Eudosia materializes like a fly in the ointment, pointing out his imperfections. This aunt doses correctly; her sharp commentary is like a stimulus, a goad that is supposed to provoke critical thinking. However, the method of criticism alone does not guarantee any ready-made “truth.” Although Eudosia craves joy and experience, and flees her gloomy, stagnant house, she relies on untested common sense. She prefers the sensational journalism of the “Diablo Cojuelo” to reading and education.

Placed within this medicalized milieu, Francisca depends on drugs both to doze off and to shake off her somnolence. Francisca greets Ambrosina’s rumor because she wishes a reason to deny sex to Ángel, even if this reason is false. Meanwhile she suspects that Eudosia might be right about Ferreti, but does Eudosia’s criticism offer distressed Francisca any consolation? Francisca outbids Eudosia’s temptation of “truth” with a higher dose and eventually an overdose of medication. The nuanced elaborateness around Francasci’s thinking on drugs demonstrates the centrality of modern pharmacy to her work. However, drugs did not hold any privileged relation to “truth” unless the antecedents of human history stepped in. The same applied to revolution; concrete material content distinguished one revolution from another, a popular uprising from a populist machination. Even though pharmacy and revolution can mobilize huge reserves of energy, it is up to every person and community either to
indulge in escapism (like liberal Ángel and low class people in the novel), or to labour on their liberation (like Francasci’s women protagonists). The contemporary reader might question Francasci’s rather elitist logic, yet she advanced pharmacy to the major interpretative paradigms of the turn of the century.

Notes

1. During earlier times, doctors considered the physical constitution of the patient to determine which medicine was most suitable.

2. For information on patients’ treatment in the Hospital Militar in the 1850s see Francisco Moscoso Puello, vol. 5 pp. 123-125.

3. Priests and lay brothers, among them Jesuits until their expulsion in 1767, engaged in education, science, medicine, and pharmacy for most of the colonial period. In the nineteenth century, many still participated in the exercise of medicine. For instance, doctor Elias Rodriguez y Ortiz was a titular bishop and a botanist (Moscoso Puello vol. 5 336). Emiliano Tejera’s brother, Apolinar Vicente Tejera Penson, combined his priesthood with pharmacy, law, politics, and literature; albeit he eventually left his priesthood in 1907 (Moscoso Puello vol. 5 336). Apolinar Tejera even authored the book of literary criticism Literatura dominicana: comentarios critico-históricos. As a pharmacist, he directly competed with other licensed apothecaries. The Archbishop Tomás de Portes e Infante edited the circular in 1855 to urge doctors, surgeons, parteras, barbers, and in their absence the priests, to perform a post-mortem Caesarean section (Moscoso Puello vol. 5 303-306).

4. Viviane Quirke stresses the need to go beyond the understanding of pharmacy as “set of ideas and practices” and study “pharmaceutical styles of thinking and doing” (99), by which she means the discipline’s social, cultural, economic, and political implications.

5. On the comparable role pharmacy played in Puerto Rican politics, see Antonio Pedreira, p. 141.

6. I follow April J. Mayes who uses the term “elite” to refer to the wealthiest groups of nineteenth-century Dominican society, among which she includes “intellectuals and municipal bureaucrats who viewed themselves as a cultured, governing class but who were not necessarily wealthy. The last group was still considered gente de primera—they enjoyed social standing and held political appointments—but many of them worked or lived on income from rental properties” (The Mulatto Republic 12).

7. While her protagonist, Francisca Martinoff, is horrified that someone might think she is a coquette (44), in 1930 Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo’s female heroine Dr. Jover, declares blatantly: “flirtearé de preciso para no disminuir mi ascendente social y viendo tú que me desean los otros hombres, te resultaré más deseable” (115). For more on the gendered meaning of flirting in women’s writing see Ángel A. Rivera’s “Modernity, Flirting, Seduction, and Urban Social Landscape in Carmela Eulate Sanjurjo’s El asombroso doctor Jover.”

8. Mayes explains that “Trujillo’s support for female suffrage was a shrewd, political manoeuvre aimed at strengthening domestic support for the regime and undermining its critics” (“Why Dominican” 349). In 1942, the Acción Feminista Dominicana became the Feminine Section of Trujillo’s Dominican Party while the member that refused to co-opt, doctor and writer Evangelina Rodriguez Perozo, was “erased from official feminist memory” (“Why Dominican” 350).

9. Rafael Maria Moscoso Puello, Francisco Eugenio’s brother, commented that doctor Elias Rodriguez y Ortiz “viajó por casi toda la República en su calidad de cura de almas que fue de varias parroquias de la arquidiócesis dominicana, y residió varios años en Haití. En algunas de las obras botánicas que formaban parte de su rica biblioteca aparecían notas al margen sobre plantas, solicitadas por él en el vecino Estado” (Catalogus flora domingensis cit. in Moscoso Puello vol. 5 227-228). Rodriguez y Ortiz combined his primary vocation with medicine, as if aspiring to assist people in his care both physically and spiritually; beyond the theoretical scientific appeal, the expression “cura de almas” activates the practical side of botany, as search for medicinal plants.

10. See Zola’s The Experimental Novel. On Flaubert and Zola’s metaphor of a pen as a scalpel, see Caroline De Mulder “L’homme au scalpel: la figure de l’anatomiste dans le roman terrifiant du XIXe siècle.” Additionally, Rainer Warning draws on Georges Canguilhem to demonstrate how Zola borrowed from biology and further elaborated the concept of the pathological: “For the nineteenth century, however, the difference between illness and health is merely quantitative. This was formulated in exemplary fashion by the doctor F. J. Broussais: illnesses originate from insufficient or excessive irritation of normal tissue” (708). Zola described the empire as une époque de folie: “the empire is thus an organism which has succumbed to its illness. This deadly “folie” is traced back to a première lésion organique, more precisely to the débordement des appétits, le large soulèvement de notre âge, qui se rue aux jouissances. This acts almost as a quote of the
Broussais principle: illness through overstimulation. But how is insufficient or excessive stimulation measured? It is one of Canguilhem’s main insights that the polarity between the pathological and the normal is substituted for that between illness and health as a result of the Broussais principle” (708). Then the concept of the pathological allowed Zola to fantasize how adverse circumstances undo social normalcy and unleash what “discourses of knowledge exclude” (710).

11. Warning explains that the residue of metaphysics was ubiquitous in positivism since “To the extent that the new sciences of life, work and language devoted themselves to the discovery of functional units, they could not simply turn away from metaphysical questions. The interest, typical of classical epistemes, in tables classifying the observable yielded to the search for origins, movements, which are completed in unobservable spatial and temporal depths” (706). If Zola applied genetics to reach deep into family history, Francasci relied on pharmacy—which occupied a border position between a positivist science and the occult—to access the inner depths.

12. Amelia Francasci’s real name was Francisca Amelia Marchena de Leyba. She was from the renowned Sephardic Jewish family but was raised Catholic by her Dominican mother Justa Sánchez. Her distant relative friar Antonio de Marchena sheltered Christopher Columbus in the La Rábida convent and promoted his voyages across the Atlantic before Queen Isabel. Meanwhile his brother’s family, expelled from Spain, settled in Curaçao after a while. Rafael de Abraham de Marchena emigrated to Santo Domingo in 1835; yet involved in politics as he was, he left the country twice: first for Puerto Rico where Francisca was born and later for Curaçao where she most likely attended school. Francasci’s brother Eugenio de Marchena—highly estimated by Hostos (vol. 21 456-9)—cofounded a Masonic lodge “Logia La Fé”, active in many philanthropic organizations. Her cousin Eugenio Generoso de Marchena “was instrumental in obtaining a major European loan for the Dominican Republic” (Goldish 134), the notorious Westendorp loan, in 1888 (Hoetink 152-153). As an executive of the so-called National Bank of Santo Domingo, he opposed the dictator Ulises Heureaux’s politics and was executed in 1893. For more on Francasci’s family history see Josette Capriles Goldish’s Once Jews: Stories of Caribbean Sephardim, pp. 121-38.

13. Three books stand out amongst Francasci’s work in terms of the role pharmacy played in the process of gender emancipation: Monseñor de Meriño, Francisca Martinoff, and Madre culpable. Francasci formulated her writing agenda as she defied challenges specific to her gendered position. The rise of gender awareness accompanied the evolution of the genre; from the romance novel in Madre culpable through the exploration of female psychology and elements of realism in Francisca Martinoff to the disguised autobiography in Monseñor de Meriño. The more Francasci wrote, the more emancipated and sophisticated her authorial voice became.

14. E.g. see Marcela Saldívia-Berglund’s “Representation, Espiritismo and Sexual Politics in Tapia’s Postumos.”

15. On the uneven institutionalization of literature, see Julio Ramos’s Divergent Modernities, pp. 52-61.

16. Yet even conservative players called themselves liberal. In the nineteenth-century usage of “liberal” meant generous, intelligent, in favour of political sovereignty and private initiative in the economic sphere, without referring necessarily to the doctrine of individual and socio-political liberty.

17. The de Marchenas family, specifically Eugenio Generoso de Marchena, actively supported Ulises Heureaux’s government until the elections of 1892, in which Francasci’s cousin lost to Heureaux.

18. Juan Bosch interpreted the lack of political coherence in the nineteenth century as symptomatic of economic backwardness. If La Trinitaria sought the liberal ideal “of a bourgeois, hence, republican, democratic, and representative society,” the ranchers “fought to maintain the system that had come down from colonial times” since they prospered under this system (196). From 1844 to 1865 “the petty bourgeoisie tried to wrest political power from the ranchers” (197). In this period, their contingent leader was Buenaventura Báez; however, Báez “would not distinguish among the methods of governance he had to use. For him, the important thing was to maintain himself in power . . . but for him it was all the same to use liberal or violent methods of governance” (197). After Pedro Santana died and the ranchers’ economic power declined, “the old battle of the petty bourgeoisie grouped against this sector became an endless battle of the lower petty bourgeoisie against the upper and middle” (198). As a Marxist, Bosch undermined the significance of conservative populism. He preferred to ignore that Santana and Báez barely represented any large social group, worrying instead about their administration’s immediate gains. From the War of Restoration Báez emerged as a contingent leader of the poorest classes while the Azul Party adopted the liberal ideology of La Trinitaria to the extent it depended on the middle and upper classes. As late as in 1894 in his essay with the humorous title “Public Enemies: The Revolutionary and the Pig,” Emiliano Tejera interpreted political instability as a function of the free-ranging livestock that benefited the ranchers.

19. E.g. see his “Uneasiness about the US Government.”

20. However, his aunt Ramona Ureña insinuated in her letter of 1897 that her nephew enjoyed reading Madre Culpable: “Debió ser empresa ardua para ti leer a Madre Culpable. Tú que no lees novelas aunque sean de Verne que tanto instruyen, meterte entre tantos desmayos y suspiros. Aunque parece que la leiste con mucho gusto cuando no te pareció muy mala. Te envío, según tu deseo, el otro parte de su neurosis” (Epistolario 281).

21. See Liliana Schifter’s Espíritu e identidad farmacéuticos on the Colegio de Boticarios de Madrid (83-84) and Real Colegio de Farmacia de Madrid (87-89). Similar regional institutions existed in Catalonia, Aragon, and other provinces.
22. See Carlos Larrazábal Blanco’s *Familias Dominicanas*.
23. For more on mortality levels in the mid-nineteenth century, see Peter Stanley’s *For Fear of Pain*, pp. 152-153.
24. See Raymond Williams’s “Realism and Non-Naturalism” on realism’s focus on the “real world,” both in the sense of a disenchanted world, without the defining presence of “extra-human and supernatural” forces, and “against the presentation of ‘substitute worlds,’” based on . . . the interests and evasions of a bourgeoisie which wanted to avoid looking at the social and human world which it had created and now controlled” (200-201).
25. Although there were several books with the title *L’Amour conjugal*, Duffy believes that Flaubert meant the one by Bousquet because it “indeed contains gravures” as described in *Madame Bovary* (Duffy “Madame” 80).
26. After all, for Ronell, Emma is a profoundly but not “simply gendered” woman (104), if there has ever been such a thing.
27. Like many of her contemporaries, Francasci considered realism synonymous with psychological plausibility; specifically, she characterized Julien Viaud (aka Pierre Loti), author of disturbing exotic novels, as “poeta y realista, soñador semipterno y pintor mágico” (*Francisca Martinoff*’93). For more on Loti’s style see Alain Quella-Villéger, Bruno Vercier’s *Pierre Loti photographe*, and Peter James Turberfield’s *Pierre Loti and the Theatricality of Desire*.
28. Of course, the diary could have been Francasci’s own initiative.
29. Importantly, *Monseñor de Meriño* should not be mistaken for Francasci’s diary; the location of the latter or even whether the author retained it is unknown.
30. The pertinent quotation reads: “En el Ateneo ha empezado esta crisis de carácter que ahora experimento: allí bajé de mi ideal y me situé en el mundo” (vol. 1 140). Similarly for Hostos, crisis was a way to access the “real” world.
31. My translation: Broussais “watched through the large end of a monocular, and saw nothing but inflammation. The other [Andral] through the eyepiece, a more pragmatic approach, which enabled him to say that, although the feverish process translated into general manifestations, it nevertheless remained that it should correspond to local affections, in liquids or solids, and succeeding a lesion of unknown nature and location.”
32. Not quite dead as later Joris-Karl Huysmans, François Mauriac, and Georges Bataille among many others demonstrated, yet religious experience substituted for the theological regime of truth. For more on the Catholic novel see the classical study by Malcolm Scott *The Struggle for the Soul of the French Novel* or a more recent article by Toby Garfitt “What Happened to the Catholic Novel?”
33. I do not extrapolate *Monseñor de Meriño* literary analysis to the “real” world in this case.
34. Balsam also referred to good wine, which further corroborates my argument.
35. See Maria Hynes’s “Surpassing Ecstasy, Infinite Enthusiasm” on ecstasy as “a figure of the originary opening of beings beyond themselves and toward the other” (59).
36. Tejera was Meriño’s former secretary. Cassá attributes the end of their friendship to the fact that Meriño paid “el costo de la manutención de su hijo Álvaro a Emiliano Tejera con tierras” (74), which underscores the importance of economic logic to the pharmacist.
37. Francasci wanted “seguir la regla de arte que quiere que la verdadera hermosura resida en los contrastes” (“Historia de una novela” 183).
38. In another moment Francasci calls the city B* the second capital of the country. When the revolution occurs in the capital, it is doubled by an uprising in B*. This, together with the fact that Francisca Martinoff’s husband Ángel administers a small railway company, provides the reader, eager to follow the representation game, with some clues. There were two railways that transported tobacco from Moca, Santiago de los Caballeros, La Vega, and San Francisco de Macorís to Puerto Plata and Sánchez. B* interpreted as a Dominican city is likely to be located somewhere in the Cibao region, a composite of Moca—where Heureaux was assassinated—and Santiago—where most caudillo revolutions began. Additionally, Francisca Martinoff’s aunt Eudosia is an avid reader of two local newspapers. Santiago was the only city besides Santo Domingo with a considerable journalistic activity at the time. As Francasci collaborated in the cultural supplement “Los Lunes del Listín” and José Ricardo Roques’s literary magazine “La Cuna de América,” she was likely interested in cultural journalism, even if she criticized Eudosia’s nosiness. Eudosia read newspapers instead of books and learnt all city news from “Correo de B*”/“Diario de B*” (the author is inconsistent) and all “private” household gossip from “Diablo Cojuelo” (86). Dana Brand explains that one of the first Parisian department stores was called “Le Diable Boiteux” due to the “particular suitability of this image to represent the consumption of the city as spectacle” (204). Despite certain cultural capacity, however, the Cibao region, if not decadent per se, went through a period of economic decline as sugar and coffee industries bloomed in the South-East. This aspect might have attracted Francasci as she searched for the decadent milieu.
39. Francasci aspired to be read in France whose literary scene conveyed the most prestige to the writer. When some Dominican gave Georges Ohnet her “Recuerdos e impresiones” and the French novelist praised it in a short note, this was reproduced in *Revista Literaria* as a measure of international recognition of Dominican talent.
40. After Lilís’s assassination, the political competition began between Jimenistas, or bolos, supporters of Juan Isidro Jimenes, and Horacistas, or coludos, followers of Horacio Vásquez. Bosch agreed that his Marxist analysis of class struggle no longer applied as the country was divided between the two parties “in an incoherent and absurd manner” (217). He
explained that the political climate “was a personalist struggle fought in order to seize power for personal needs, not to transform the country’s economic and social bases” (219). When in 1903 Horacistas and Jimenistas united under the ex-priest Carlos Morales Languasco to overthrow Alejandro Woss y Gil, for Bosch “it was disorder maintained in perpetuity, not a revolution. Between the Bolos and the Rabuses there was no difference, far less between the two parties’ caudillos” (219). On the one hand, both Jimenes and Vásquez entered politics as “Azules from Luperón’s time” (219) and thus had shared liberal ideas that depended on the national state and oligarchic private property. Bosch accused the two parties of a total lack of ideology as Lilisistas merged with Antililisistas and his preferred division according to social strata was no longer valid. Yet Bosch also blamed, though inconsistently, the lower petty bourgeoisie—as opposed to the upper and middle petty bourgeoisie—of the lack of ideology and caudillismo as early as 1844. In other words, this lack of ideals is attributable to the gradual loss of national sovereignty since prospects for national development were no longer sustainable when the United States government appointed a financial agent “without whose approval the island’s treasury could not disburse any funds” and collected customs duties, 55% of which were used “to pay creditors and customs personnel” (Martinez-Vergne 10). Bosch sustained that when the United States formally seized power in 1916, this rather contributed to the reestablishment of the “centers of social authority, which had practically vanished since Lilís’s death” (233).

41. Meaning their inability to coherently represent interests of their political supporters, Cassá talks about “revoluciones’, o sea, las sublevaciones de los caudillos que, con el concurso del pueblo, aumentaban la pobreza” (134).

42. In modernism, the opposition was not so much between the rational and the irrational—the dichotomy popularized by the critique of positivism—as between the soul/spirit and flesh/heart. See Dario’s Los raros, e.g. about Leconte de Lisle: “Puso el espíritu sobre el corazón” (41).

43. Another example that, although sympathetic of the uneducated poor, reproduces their moral inferiority is Pedro Francisco Bonó’s short novel El Montero (1856) as well as his essay “Barriers to Progress: Revolutions, Diseases, Holidays, and Cockfights.”

44. I will discuss Billini in length in the next chapter. The right adjective in this context would be “spiritual” rather than “rational.”

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46. See Roberto Cassá’s Movimiento obrero y lucha socialista en la República Dominicana on the organization of workers’ movements in the 19th century.

47. Francasci further undermined doctors’ authority by referring to the satirical sketches Ces bons docteurs by Gyp (aka Sibylle Riqueti de Mirabeau) (86). It is noteworthy that the Gyp of Ces bons docteurs did not adopt her overt anti-Semitism yet, and Francasci might have ignored her standpoint in the Dreyfus affair. On Henry James and Nietzsche’s admiration of Gyp’s literary technique, see Joseph Hillis Miller’s “Henry James and ‘Focalization,’ or Why James loves Gyp,” p. 130.

48. Certainly, the latter refers to the French revolution.

49. The revolution turns out repetitive and indeed permanent if the reader correlates the fictitious text with the nineteenth century Dominican history, even though this is only one reading strategy among others.

50. Additionally, the clock ticking hypnotizes Francisca (21).

51. The image is also reminiscent of Socrates drinking his chalice of poison hemlock.

52. Again, self-censorship lurks when Francisca clarifies that no money is involved and it is not gambling, rather “manía inocente” (105).

53. More on this in the coming subsection.

54. Until the canon reinstates the church’s power over procreation and orders Francisca to give up her nonsense (117-118).

55. Manuel Jiménez’s “Codex o farmacopea francesa” (1847) explains that cordial potion is made of cloves syrup, cinnamon alcoholate, confection of hyacinths, peppermint, and saffron water. It is a stimulant tonic and “se emplea principalmente en los desfallecimientos de naturaleza vaga, cuyo origen atribuye el vulgo al corazón, de donde le ha venido el nombre de pocion cordial, aunque obra primitivamente estimulando el estomago” (212).

56. I will return to this point soon.

57. Later she nurses her aunt Leocadia who is likely to have infected Francisca with TB (30).

58. Francisca does not feel physical pain. Even when she commits suicide, she opts for a painkiller: “volvió en sí, tan aliviada, como si su mal hubiera sido un sueño. Lejos de sufrir, sentía más bien un gran bienestar físico” (152). Juan Duchesne-Winter calls a non-anatomical body, the body that is not biologically overdetermined, a “cuerpo indiscreto” in the sense that “no es un lugar; sólo un lugar no-lugar como el castillo interior de Teresa de Ávila, donde se vence el sitio de la diada interior-exterior, serviría de metáfora espacial del cuerpo indiscreto” (29). In aesthetic terms, Ángel’s epileptic body is an homage to Zola’s theory of over-determinancy of heredity and environment. Meanwhile Francisca’s pharmaco-body is already a step beyond naturalism.

59. Francasci could not have written otherwise because both abortion and suicide were tabooed, which is not surprising in the country where all abortion is still criminalized as of 2017. In 1791 in France “a new statute allowed for the prosecution
of criminal abortionists. Such people were not defined and it might simply have been those without any medical degree” (“Criminalizing of abortion” 89). Art. 317 of the French Criminal Code of 1810 prosecuted medical practitioners, including pharmacists, who induced abortion and aborting women (Nypels 222). The Dominican Republic followed French criminal law since the beginning of the nineteenth century, yet the criminalization of abortion was not enforced until the second half of the century. In 1884 the French Criminal Code was translated and adopted as Law 2274 of August 1884 (known as Código Penal Dominicano). Denise Paiewonsky explains that the progressive penalization of abortion reflected many socio-economic and political shifts during modernization. The transfer of women’s healthcare from comadronas, “hábiles aborteras que ofrecían este servicio desde tiempos inmemoriales” to physicians implied “no solo una transferencia del derecho a practicar el aborto (de la comadrona al médico), sino también del derecho a decidir si practicar o no el aborto (de la mujer al médico)” (19). This transfer started a heated professional competition and “campañas difamatorias” that presented comadronas as “vulgares criminales que asesinaban niños en el vientre de sus madres, en agudo contraste con el médico, cuyas decisiones estarian siempre basadas en conocimientos técnicos superiores y criterios puramente ‘científicos’” (19). Paiewonsky pinpoints that the moral condemnation of abortion was recent at the time as well. In 1869, Pope Pius IX annulled the distinction between embryonic and fetal abortions (only the former used to be condemned) and penalized any abortion with excommunication (17).

60. Before laudanum contained all the opium alkaloids, including the potent emetic noscapine/narcotine.

61. There is a parallel place in the novel where the narrator is sarcastic about the canon’s willingness to sacrifice Francisca for the general well-being: “cierto escorzo de su conciencia, algo así como un ligero, ¡oh!, ligerísimo remordimiento acompañó su pena. ¿No habría él contribuido, en parte, con sus consejos, a sacrificar a Francisca?, preguntóse un instante. ¡No! … Y tenía razón, ¿qué es una vida humana, dos, tres mil qué son, cuando se trata del cumplimiento de las leyes convencionales que la sociedad ha establecido” (146). Even though Francasci wrote in a defiant manner, she disputed the medical and ecclesiastic authorities first and foremost before herself. In other words, she did not think how to convey her criticism efficiently by narrative means; rather she worked on her own mind. Therefore, Francasci connected inner emancipation to the philosophical problem of truth because patriarchy was grounded on the exclusive rights over discourse and to set herself free meant to relativize what did and what did not make sense.
Chapter 3

Afro-Dominican Rites, Ethnobotany, and Healing: Messy Erasures in the National Canon

Francisco Gregorio Billini’s novel Baní o Engracia y Antoñita (1892) and Federico García Godoy’s Rufinito (1908) are classics of regionalism in Dominican literature. When compared with representations of Puerto Rican rural space of the same period, in which a naturalist style of writing displayed sick and sickening bodies and customs, Dominican texts present ambivalent landscapes—bucolic yet underdeveloped and “threatened” by foreign influences. Baní stands out within the nineteenth-century Dominican literary archive due to its numerous hiatuses and discontinuities. The narration entangles readers in the dense web of its comedia de enredo plotting as it diverts their attention from a rather brutal conceptual erasure of African-inspired diasporic cultures from the Dominican imagery. This disguise conceals the elites’ attempts to appropriate Black-Creole rites and healing practices without any acknowledgement of the sources. Not unlike Francasci, Billini in his narrative transformed a dominant religious sensibility. Apart from the fact that Billini and Francasci shared some common fin-de-siècle aesthetics, in both cases the Archbishop Fernando Arturo de Meriño mediated their quasi-religious therapeutic writings. Neither of these writers was conversant with the Catholic or Afro-Creole religions—Francasci for being half-Jewish and Billini for being an outsider to African-inspired Caribbean cultures. Thus the novel Baní feeds on vernacular ethnobotany and Afro-Creole therapeutics and spits back hexed bodies whose degree of spiritual possession—already dissociated from African inspirations—ranges from epileptic attack to martyrdom to pouring acid onto one’s face to social isolation. Yet the text insists on explaining them through popular Catholicism and the Christian moral law.

Methodological Challenges

[Palo Briyumba in Cuba] is as much the art of crafting matter into fatefully powerful substances as it is a narrative art that creates shapes of hope and fear from the silences that pervade our everyday life.

—Todd Ramón Ochoa

The number of turn-of-the-century literary works that deal with non-institutionalized religions in the Dominican Republic is limited. Although there does exist a considerable corpus on Dominican vudú and other religious expressions since the twentieth century—Carlos Esteban Deive, June Rosenberg, Martha Ellen Davis, José Francisco Alegria-Pons, Dagoberto Tejeda Ortiz, Cristina
Sánchez-Carretero—this anthropological perspective presents many methodological difficulties in relation to earlier periods. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero claims that, because of surrounding social stigma and systematic silencing of Afro-Dominican legacy, there is no consensus about ways to name Afro-Creole religious practices in the Dominican Republic: “A excepción del “judú” de la provincia de Samaná y el “liborismo” de San Juan de la Maguana, no existe un término genérico de este tipo de prácticas religiosas” (255). Inasmuch as “Nombrar algo es otorgarle existencia, conocerlo y reconocerlo”, migrant Dominican ritual practitioners in Spain resist the reference to vudú and instead self-identify euphemistically as “servidores o portadores de misterios”; as a result they “practican una religión sin nombre, una religión no organizada para la que ni siquiera hay unanimidad sobre cómo referirse a ella” (Sánchez-Carretero 256).

From this perspective, the gesture behind the discourse promoting the term of Dominican vudú gains political overtones. It aspires to redress stigmatization of popular religions and align them with their counterparts in Haiti and the Franco- and Anglophone Caribbean. Such scholarship becomes both an empowering and logical operation in many cases. For instance, Néstor E. Rodríguez interprets vudú poetics in Marcio Veloz Maggiolo’s El hombre del acordeón (2003). He explores the affinity of Haitian vodou for the liminal rayano subject, the inhabitant of the Dominican-Haitian borderland. Now the same approach does not apply as smoothly to the southern city of Baní or to the central La Vega province. What would escape definition is the very efficacy and ubiquity of syncretic Afro-Creole spirituality, healing, and harming practices in the turn-of-the-century texts in which they appear thoroughly camouflaged as a Catholic devotion.

Another important methodological concern arises from the implication of the construct of race in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dominican literature. I do not take for granted the correlation of race and Dominican non-institutionalized religions; and nowadays race does play less of a determining, yet still significant role in the rebranded misterios. However, in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century narrative there was a vital identification of the socially constructed category of Blackness and syncretic religions, their mutual nurturing. Although I am aware of their many pitfalls, I use conventional terms such as Afro-Creole, Afro-Dominican, and Afro-Caribbean to facilitate comprehension and because of my view that semantics evolve to reflect collective views and perceptions. One way to change attitudes lies in our performative ability to express other meanings through familiar vocabulary. On the one hand, I embrace Todd Ramón Ochoa’s idea of choosing the
adjective African-inspired over Afro-Cuban because the latter “binds people and the materials they engage to an originary and inescapable African past” (8). He also disavows references to religion in the normative sense of “belief and practice” (8) in the context of Kongo-inspired Palo Briyumba due to the fundamental openness of the work of African inspirations towards immanence, creativity, and the new. On the other hand, I hope it is possible to significantly decreaseessentialistnotes in terms such as Afro-Cuban or Afro-Dominican without dodging similar deictic forms altogether. Even though occasionally interchangeable, the words Afro-Creole, Afro-Dominican, and Afro-Caribbean have nuances in meaning. To self-identify as an Afro-Dominican entails awareness of one’s attachment to the national community; on the other hand, Afro-Caribbean implies shared experiences across the Antillean islands. Parallel to Creole, Afro-Creole, in turn, combines the sense of historical awareness and cultural belonging.

Now, in what sense are African inspirations, or religious rites therapeutic? Trujillo’s and Joaquín Balaguer’s ideologue Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi admired that the Bando nacional de policia y gobierno banned the baile jodú in 1862 (95), while the popular poet Juan Antonio Alix in his racist or, at least, neurotic poem “Las bailarinas del judú en la calle de Santa Ana” (1904) praised the police endorsement of the prohibition of Afro-Dominican rites (cit. in Rodríguez Demorizi 97-9). By the beginning of the twentieth century there were repeated attempts to halt all unlicensed medical activity as well, which, of course, included that of Afro-Dominican ritual practitioners. In this way the authorities tried to interrupt nearly four centuries of efficient medical, pharmaceutical, and midwifery practices when it had been up to newly-arrived African bozales and Afro-Creoles of both sexes to care for sick slaves and free populations of all races and classes. Historians of the Liborismo movement Jan Lundius and Mats Lundahl highlight that when in 1909 “El Brujo de San Juan” (de la Maguana) Olivorio Mateo Ledesma, or Papá Liborio was accused of illegal medical practice, he was acquitted in court because, according to his testimony, neither did he charge for his services nor administered “any beverages or herbs to his patients, but simply used his hands to cure them” (51).

I connect the emergence in the late nineteenth century of more esoteric rites, such as Espiritismo across the Americas, and Palo, or Reglas de Congo in Cuba to advances of disciplinary knowledge and increasingly stricter regulations around public healthcare, among other reasons. On the material level, frictions, water, dirt, feathers, and sticks came to the foreground—for they were always part of African and African-inspired healing and harming practices—at the same time when other
substances and procedures were outlawed to ritual practitioners. On the other side, problems that ritual practitioners are capable of resolving had not been limited to the physical body. Instead in Afro-Caribbean rites, personal health and success are predicated upon complex networks of social relations. While during the colonial times European travelers and scientists bioprospected and tried to appropriate abstract *materia medica*, “objective” knowledge of native medicinal plants and substances, local Dominican writers intuited that the power of Afro-Creole therapeutics lied elsewhere, not so much in specific materials as in a superb ability to build contingent communal bonds and to heal the entangled social *enramada*. By the end of the nineteenth century the undeniable appeal and social and political power of Afro-Creole narratives and aesthetics caught the attention of the elites.\(^7\)

Another methodological challenge I have encountered is the relation of Afro-Creole non-institutionalized religions to things past and present, traditions and the new. Pablo Gómez provides historical models of knowledge production by circum-Caribbean ritual practitioners in the long seventeenth century, before the introduction of large-scale sugar plantations in the region and “strong” implications of race for that matter. Despite Inquisitorial persecution, Gómez depicts a rather optimistic picture of social integration of forced and voluntary African migrants and their descendants in the early modern Caribbean, specifically in large seaports like Cartagena, Portobello, and Havana and surrounding maroon settlements. Gómez studies new experiential approaches to reality that Black ritual practitioners adopted in the face of cultural dispossession and precarity and their ensuing sensorial “colonization” of the environment (102): “In Kongo, where deep currents of communal meaning flowed through the social landscape, the pattern of Antonio’s [West Central African healer Antonio Congo] words carried particular significance related to social afflictions; however, these words often failed to resonate with his audiences in Caribbean lands” (101). As a result, Afro-Caribbean healers had little choice but to depart from their interiorized religious dogma and create knowledge that could be convincing to their multilingual and multicultural clients, who ranged from slaves to Hispanic ecclesiastic authorities and therefore lacked any coherent ideology as a community.

Since legal obstacles such as the inability to meet the *limpieza de sangre* requirement excluded even a remote possibility of becoming licensed medical practitioners, faith healers withstood competition on the overheated healthcare market through their close interactions with the Caribbean environment. They relied on indigenous numinous entities to have dibs on the sacred places of the dead, secured available medications and *materia medica* from all over the world, and thoroughly
studied native plants. By unearthing Black histories of the senses, Gómez demonstrates that Afro-Caribbean rites and the cult of the dead—the base for their healing and harming practices—did not translate into nostalgic lingering on the past and, quite the opposite, meant openness to handy materials and local narratives.

Using African rituals and knowledge deliberately as inspirations and ways to confront the new world, Black and mixed-race faith healers developed Caribbean ontologies in the form of new meanings and sensorial landscapes. They attributed to themselves a superior faculty for “smelling,” thus claiming sensorial competence to detect evil spirits, harming herbs, and suitable spaces for healing. Likewise, they conveyed sense through stunning bodily performances and extracted illnesses in the visible form of worms, sticks, and insects, which was not unlike “bloodletting, enemas, and purges … used by European healers to make visible and balance the invisible humours that formed the bread and butter of early modern Galenic learned medicine” (Gómez 105). Finally, ritual practitioners imbued Caribbean social spaces with nonlinguistic sensual and sonic qualities of incomprehensible words and pervasive drumming, summoning powerful spiritual entities.

**Afro-Creole Rites and Healing in the Dominican Foundational Narrative: Federico García Godoy’s *Rufinito***

Dominican foundational narratives assert institutionalized Catholicism yet manifest being mesmerized by the control over sensorial landscapes exercised by Afro-Creole ritual practitioners. A powerful example of this ambiguity is García Godoy’s historical story *Rufinito* (1908), the first part of his *Trilogía patriótica*, which was followed by *Alma dominicana* (1911) and *Guanuma* (1914). In Miguel Ángel Fornerín’s words, the *Trilogía patriótica* “instala un escenario en el que se ponen en juego las distintas representaciones del origen de la nación” (81); *Rufinito* specifically traces the origin of the nation state to the end of Haitian rule in 1844. Like *Bani, Rufinito* is set in a decentralized, anarchic milieu. The story narrates the inability of the liberal secret society *La Trinitaria* to consolidate the territory in the aftermath of its independence from Haiti and a subsequent ascent to power of the populist military leader Pedro Santana. Although it has not been uncommon to delegitimize and demonize the government on racial grounds from Boyer to Santana and Heureaux to Trujillo, García Godoy went as far as to suggest that Dominican mixed-race peasants worshiped Santana as a loa deity. However, if compared to another later classic of African inspirations, Juan Bosch’s short story “Luis
Pie” (1943), in *Rufinito* the function of religion proves to be more this-worldly while less anaesthetic and compensatory.9

Even though the story defames Rufino’s ritual practices, it nevertheless shows that the protagonist accomplished quite mundane goals through his worshipping.10 La Vega, in the Northern Cibao region where the action takes place, is disconnected from both Santo Domingo and the regional capital city Santiago de los Caballeros, which is why the liberal elites, *Dones*, appear helpless and ill-informed about political struggles and the growing popularity of Santana among the peasantry. The *Dones* are professionals, all from well-off families, mostly lawyers and doctors whose symbolic power goes as if uncontested in town. Although their duty is to promote legality and health, the narrator anticipates their crime and comments that, as skillful swordsmen, they always carry “debajo del brazo el sable o larga espada de cazoleta” (48). Contrary to the *Dones*’ political naivety, Rufino is presented as imbued with a peculiar political sagacity: “Quien ciertamente no se equivocaba era Rufinito” (53). García Godoy used overtly racist rhetoric, much in the manner of Sarmiento’s depiction of Facundo Quiroga in his 1848 *Facundo o civilización y barbarie*, to describe this character: “Mulato oscuro, con algo más de cuarenta años, fornido, rechoncho, de cara vulgar como abotagada por el uso de licores fuertes y en la que lucían sus ojos sin expresión perpetuamente soñolientos” (53). Rufino’s eyes, “perpetuamente soñolientos” and without expression, suggest a dream-like, narcotic state. García Godoy interpreted this apparent absent-mindedness as Rufino’s cunning ruse to divert attention from his political project. Alongside spiritual possession, dreams and revelations in dreams are the most common ways of communication with the dead for the initiates. The dreaming oftentimes prefigures and starts off the ritual work aimed at transformation of “the fates of the living” (Ochoa 1), which explains its pivotal role in Afro-Caribbean inspirations. The narration denies this potential of dreaming and presents it as a disconnection from surrounding reality. However, “high” Romantic aesthetics of oneiric states and daydreaming saturate Rufino with an artistic flare and reveal ambiguity—disgust and fascination—in relation to the racialized other.

Writing in the early twentieth century, García Godoy reinterpreted racial stereotypes in a Neo-Romantic way and associated Blackness with the marginalized Dominican peasantry. Instead of incriminating vagrancy to Rufino directly, García Godoy remarked more subtly that Rufino “brujuleaba por las calles del pueblo” and described his Neo-Romantic anti-hero as “descalzo, vistiendo pantalón y camisa de burdo lienzo, sin sombrero, con solo un pañuelo de colores llamativos bien anudado
alrededor de su ancha cabeza” (54). Although the content of such (mis)representation is negative, Rufino’s “pañuelo” is the only bright spot amid the dull Cibao countryside. After making excessive drinking habits easily readable on Rufino’s face, the narrator withdraws the severity of his judgement: “Con frecuencia estaba a medios pelos o cosa parecida, aunque solo en ocasiones muy sonadas, sea dicho en homenaje a la verdad, se achispaba en toda regla atiborrándose de aguardiente hasta perder enteramente la cabeza” (53-4). This is a curious passage because the truth seems to intervene and indicate that the narrator is less knowledgeable than the reader could have imagined. As it turns out the narrator only suspects Rufino to be “a medios pelos”; alternatively, it can be some “cosa parecida”, a lesser degree of what happens on rare, festive occasions when Rufino loses his head.

Rufino’s ritual excesses hint—without properly naming—at his prominent role as a spiritual leader in the community:

Concurría a todos los velorios donde era muy útil agenciando cosas que faltaban y practicando diligencias propias del caso. Era entusiasta cofrade de la hermandad del Espíritu Santo, y así tan pronto, al acercarse las Pascuas, se oían los clásicos y atronadores atabales, corría desalado al lugar de reunión en que sonaban aquellos rústicos y monótonos instrumentos, contribuyendo grandemente a aumentar el bullicio y a agotar la abundante provisión de cosas de comer y de beber acumulada para el mayor auge y esplendor de tales diversiones, de las que aún se conservan restos vergonzantes que van en camino de su completa desaparición. (54-5)

African-inspired cofradías, or hermandades have existed throughout the Caribbean since the late sixteenth century as sodalities “nominally integrated under the umbrella of Catholic Church,” but they “functioned as invaluable spaces of cultural and political affirmation for communities of African descent in the Caribbean” (Gómez 136). Martha Ellen Davis explains that the initial cofradías of San Juan Bautista—of Yoruba inspirations—were popular during the early modern period. Then they evolved into cofradías of Holy Spirit—of Kongo inspirations—during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries due to new West Central African centers of slave trade. She considers cofradías and espiritismo material two other Afro-Dominican non-institutionalized cults, albeit parallel and complementary to vudú (135). Cofradías of Holy Spirit, with their syncretic emphasis on the dead, negotiated sacred grounds and African-inspired burial ceremonies for their members, which oftentimes scandalized Catholic authorities. Dominican historian Carlos Larrazábal Blanco dated the cofradía of
Holy Spirit in Baní to the eighteenth century, to the sodality “acudían los esclavos de Los Ingenios que caían enfermos” (136). From the very beginning this *cofradía* engaged in healing and care of sick and moribund slaves and “no solo fue ella una manifestación sincrética afro-católica sino que muchas veces derivó hacia el espiritismo” (136). García Godoy’s writing reflected negative attitudes of his time towards Afro-Creoles and their cultures since he associated their festivities with backwardness and celebrated their gradual decline. Yet his account faithfully described what Gómez calls sonic “colonization.” *atabales* drumming and general *bullicio* were “thunderous” to Hispanic ears and defined sonic landscapes on Easter day; “drums signified a desire to address social imbalances of power” (Gómez 137) and hence threatened White hegemony.

Rufino’s fellow Hispanic Veganos despises him specifically due to his “addiction” to alcohol, which is but a metonym for his syncretic rites: “Cosas de borracho, se decía, y todos departían delante de él como pudieran hacerlo ante una pared o ante un poste” (55). In their eyes, he worships the only deity, Bacchus (56); moreover, alcohol seems to strip Rufino of his humanity and transforms him into inanimate matter, a wall or a post. This type of transformation is not fortuitous, though, as it suggests sacred, animated materials in African and Afro-Caribbean ontologies such as stone and wood. The narrator intuits that alcohol accounts for a vital transformation in Rufino: “Bajo su corteza de pobre diablo … circulaba la savia de cierto talento natural que para muchos pasaba inadvertido, pero que se revelaba en cierta facilidad de expresión, en una verbosidad plástica, a ratos pintoresca, con que sorprendía a sus oyentes, particularmente, cuando, tras copiosas libaciones, estaba en vena, lo que solo le ocurría en días festivos muy solemnes” (56). Under ritual intoxication, the dead stick mutates into a living tree, full of sap, expressive powers, and plastic verbosity that explain his leadership role in the Afro-Creole community of La Vega (61). Yet the narrator hurries to contradict himself when he paraphrases that Rufino’s “talento natural” is the result of mimicry, of his habit to mix socially, especially with “personas de rango social muy superior al suyo” (56), that is with the *Dones*.

When zombie-like Rufino comes to life to the drumming of *atabales* and under the influence of alcohol, his actions are not directed by reason alone. Even though he outsmarts and outperforms the *Dones* on the political arena, ignorant and irrational worshipping—affirms the narration—lies at the core of his behaviour: “impulsado por indomeñable fuerza de simpatía, se ladeó Rufínito hacia Santana, el hombre que su fe sencilla le hacía ver como el escogido por la dicha Providencia, era su frase favorita, para librar al país de los odiados enemigos de Occidente” (56). In the name of liberalism and
progress, the Dones will slaughter Rufino dishonorably: many swordsmen against one defenseless peasant, at night, “embozados” (94), for the offence he not only did not yet commit but might have never intended to commit (102). However, as a protagonist of the Trilogía patriótica, Rufino has but to hate Haitians. In this way García Godoy negotiated the text’s ambiguous attitude towards his protagonist; what strikes readers nowadays as an extremely racist narrative was indeed conditional upon Rufino’s anti-Haitian sentiment. The author imagined Rufino as a hatred machine pointed at Haiti, “enemigos de Occidente”. Only on this inhuman condition could he have been interpreted as an Afro-Dominican, however incongruous this antagonism might seem in a “mulato oscuro” and a spiritual initiate towards the sacred land of Afro-Caribbean inspirations.

Rufino would drink to the point where reality receded and “En su imaginación sobreexcitada, como entre esplendores de un cuadro bélico, surgía siempre Santana, jinete en brioso corcel, destrozando las huestes haitianas aterrorizadas por el brillo de su flamígera espada, con la misma facilidad con que el ilustre paladín manchego alanceaba briosamente nutridos escuadrones de ovejas…” (57). The comparison of Santana on horseback, “destrozando las huestes haitianas aterrorizadas” with mad Don Quixote evokes pictorial images of the likes of Gustave Doré in which the ingenious hidalgo resembles Saint George slaying the dragon. Due to this mediation of Don Quixote/Saint George and because Santana is for Rufino and, by extension, for Afro-Dominican peasantry a loa deity that sube a la cabeza with alcohol vapours, we can speculate that the Dominican General mirrors vudúist Ogún Badagrig, a warrior and rum aficionado. Since vudú is a non-institutionalized religion without dogmas and that every community practice in a unique way, the association of Saint George with Ogún Badagrig is unstable and has a limited, local significance (Davis 126-7). Even more haphazard were such associations in the writings of turn-of-the-century White authors who routinely confused different Afro-Caribbean inspirations. Yet the fact that Santana outgrows a generic misterio—by comparison, Heureaux in Billini Brea’s Juan Manuel does not—vouches for García Godoy’s skill and aesthetic labour to include Afro-Dominican sensibilities into the national imagery.

Rufinito’s readers glimpse that Afro-Creole rites and festivities become a political setting in which resentment and desires for social amendments ferment: “tras de apuntar algunos tragos en compañía de tipos de su laya, sentía la imperiosa necesidad de expansionarse, de dar libertad a lo que rumiaba por dentro” (57). Like in Francasci, again here appear hidden interiorities of the subaltern
subject (“lo que rumiaba por dentro”) which first surface as “vocablos aislados, gritos de júbilo, exclamaciones vagas, frases inconexas … ‘Esto va a dar lástima’… ‘Ya sabrás quién es el hombre’… ‘Pronto se verán cosas nuevas’” and translate Rufino’s repressed wish to see “inexorablemente castigados a los enemigos de Santana” (91), that is the Dones, as opposed to his public wish to clear the national territory from the “enemigos de Occidente”.

Dawn Stinchcomb demonstrates that, similar to the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, “Dominicans have attempted to ‘whiten’ their population via various means: immigration, miscegenation, and, finally, redefinition” (2). Since immigration and miscegenation “failed” to obscure the sensorial fact that the majority of the population did not look White, the discourse redefined Blackness as proper of Haiti and imagined Dominicans instead as a nation of indios, which obliterated the Black presence in literature and discourse. This is a compelling and, by now, rather standard argument, but I contend that the undeniable symbolic silencing and erasure of African heritages did not happen through rhetorical means alone. Sommer and Stinchcomb read the novel Enriquillo: Leyenda dominicana (1882) by Manuel de Jesús Galván as a crucial milestone of anti-Black sentiment since the author “falsified” history and silenced the parts of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo’s chronicles referring to Black slave rebellions (268) for ideological reasons, meant to disrupt “historical ties between his [Galván’s] mulatto-black country and the revolutionary black tradition of Haiti” (Sommer, One Master for Another 54). Galván’s omissions symbolically excluded Afro-Dominicans from the foundation of the nation.11 Yet when Blackness “refers to the self-identity associated with one’s African roots” (Stinchcomb ix), there must have been more going on in the nineteenth century than the straightforward discrediting of one’s syncretic cultural lineage.

I argue that on the sensorial level most elements of Afro-Creole material culture were matched and substituted with structurally “comparable” practices of reinvented Dominican folklore. When, before being slain himself, Rufino fantasizes with massacred Haitians, he does so—despite the tremendous absurdity of his hatred—because Ogún/Santana sube a la cabeza and mutates into Saint George/Don Quixote. “[M]alditos mañeses” (56), he name-calls across the border, possessed by anger and madness.12

Through the Afro-Creole rites Rufino struggles to resist hegemony, yet those are not immune to cultural appropriation and, plugged into bigger assemblages, work against their immediate logic. Even
before García Godoy wrote *Rufinito* in 1908, he admitted in an article published in *El Derecho* in 1885 that Haitians did not pose a direct threat of military intervention but rather of “el sistema de paulatina absorción que tan pingües resultados les proporciona” (*Obras casi completas* 41) and which “se efectúa entre las sombras, arteramente, consiguiendo palmo a palmo el terreno deseado, aprovechándose del descuido” (*Obras casi completas* 40). Thus his historical story *Rufinito* served as an urgent “remedio a tan grave mal” (*Obras casi completas* 41) in the sense that it advocated for what it meant to be an Afro-Dominican.

Since the nineteenth century, Dominican elites promoted local folklore as being of Spanish, specifically Canary origin. At the same time, they saturated their structures of feeling and the everyday with Afro-Creole elements. While, according to Stinchcomb, most nineteenth-century literary production falls into the category of the “black-as-object,” I would like to complicate this account by arguing that the binary opposition of subject-object relations does not apply easily to a literary work inasmuch as literary characters keep a residue or a seed of agency. García Godoy depicted Rufino negatively, yet the work of negation and Rufino’s function as a cunning trickster corrodes not only the *Dones*’ plans to support Duarte, but also their impeccable image of people’s assistants as doctors and lawyers that do not charge for their services. Rufino’s murder exhibits the criminal nature of their otherwise naturalized hegemony. The same, as we are about to see, holds true for Baní; there are a number of mixed-race protagonists, yet when Blacks made a fleeting appearance on the novel’s pages in the de facto segregated society, they come forward as self-conscious political subjects, demanding equal space within state institutions. Meanwhile Espiritismo absorbs the caricatured “progressive” character Don Postumio as he loses his faith in liberal politics.

**Nature, National Landscape, and Medical Geography in *Baní o Engracia y Antoñita***

Denis Cosgrove claimed that “geography’s iconic elevation of specific national landscapes may be read as an extension of the moral discourse to which landscape art had already been coupled during the eighteenth century” (xxi). The same principle applies to literature and other institutions that participated in nation state building in the nineteenth century. Billini pondered on the complementary relationship between physical and moral characteristics of a place: “¿He dicho algo referente a los rasgos morales del lugar a donde he vuelto? No: que al describirlos, superiores serían a lo indescriptible de su belleza física ¡porque en el pueblo de Baní pródiga anduvo en sus concesiones Naturaleza!” (21)
For him, Nature with a capital letter meant a fusion of physical and moral values. Landscape—however difficult to render—becomes a privileged way to approach the sublime, beyond description moral superiority of Dominicans.

The physical and moral nature of the two best friends Engracia and Antoñita establishes complimentary relations to national identity. While Engracia is “humilde hasta en sus ideales, y sobria hasta en los atavíos relucientes con que tantas mujeres suelen vestirlos” (27), “arrebato” and excess are the words that characterize Antoñita. Although Engracia is of European descent and, in theory, “foreign” to the Caribbean, Billini defined foreignness as suited his group interests best. Apparently Engracia became naturalized like a plant to the point that her eyes resemble “las yerbitas que nacen a la orilla del arroyuelo de Peravia” (23); additionally, she has “facciones finas” and “cabellera casi rubia y abundante, aunque un poco tostada” (23). Since such a phenotype did not resonate with most Dominicans, Billini introduced Antoñita as a more recognizable, yet dangerous kind. In contrast with her friend, Antoñita has “cabellos negros”, expressive—unlike Engracia’s hypnotic, Bécquer-style—eyes, and “boca que no economizaba aquellas risas sinceras” (24). In terms of European aesthetics Antoñita might well have won a Southern Beauty pageant, yet Billini emphasized that Antoñita’s excessive imagination and laughs distanced her from the essence of Baní and by extension Dominicanness: “Antoñita, por el contrario, fantaseaba hasta llegar a términos imposibles. En eso conservaba Engracia más la sencillez de su origen banilejo que Antoñita” (27). Engracia represents harmony, while Antoñita, even though easier to identify with, is a Creole child from the mythical Torrid Zone; the sense of her beauty is likewise overwhelming and torrential.

Although many Romantic writers had asserted a distinct national identity “through environmental difference” (Anderson 210), Billini went one step further. He mapped his protagonists’ race, place of birth, and travelling itineraries to evaluate their degree of belonging and moral uprightness. The villain Felipe Ozán is of “color casi indio” (45). Although born in Baní, he spent three years in Puerto Rico after the end of the War of Restoration, which sufficed for his significant moral degeneration: “en tan poco tiempo, había adquirido una desfachatez que es muy contraria al carácter sencillo de los banilejos; y se habían despertado en él ideas bebidas en una escuela fatal en punto a moralidad” (45). However, he never quite reaches the level of baseness of his aunt Candelaria Ozán, “advenediza” in Baní (49). With time Felipe redeems himself due to his patriotism and this time desexualized love for Antoñita, which is why society readmits him and entrusts him with the position
of Ayudante de Plaza (336). From Baní as well, but residing in the capital, is Felipe Ozán’s antagonist Enrique Gómez whose masculinity outmatches that of Felipe in Antoñita’s eyes. As an aspiring artist Enrique is more refined, which correlates with his lighter skin tone and exhibits Billini’s racial bias: “su color trigueño subido, sus facciones pronunciadas, su bigote y pelo negros, y sus grandes ojos también negros” (71). Enrique Gómez, in turn, cannot compare to yet another suitor of Antoñita’s, her cousin Eduardo González, who “Además de sus bellas cualidades morales tenía bienes de fortuna … cuerpo elegante, color trigueño, hermosos ojos grises y el pelo engajado” (324-5). I suspect that virtuous Eduardo González never left Baní for long. In this way Billini integrated the visual and moral production of Dominicaness.

His narrative handling of phenotypical difference imitated strategies of many Afro-Dominicans themselves of a precocious and interested understanding of race as a social construct and of blending in the nation state. The concept of the therapeutic helps to differentiate their strategies from Billini’s. For Afro-Dominicans, limited disengagement from their cultural identity was therapeutic in the sense of social healing from traumas of overwhelmingly violent displacements and legalized abuse. By contrast Billini and other letrados decontextualized and turned Afro-Caribbean narrative and material therapeutics upside down, making these stories, rites, and pharmacopeias work against their inventors. It is worth noting that Engracia and Antoñita personify a light phenotype—both are White—opposition in the novel. With his male characters, Billini assuaged stereotypes perhaps to plausibly render and appeal to mixed-race Dominicans. Felipe’s darker skin is “diluted” with a thin lower lip (45), Enrique has a black moustache, hair, and eyes, while the most light-skinned Eduardo inherited “el pelo engajado”. What is appalling, of course, is the precision with which their degree of virtue matches their skin tone. Billini projected his ideal of Dominicanness into the utopian realm, admitting that present-day Dominicans presented imperfect variations of this ideal. At the same time, he cemented the moral Dominican in racial (White) and historical (of European ancestry) terms. Once out of fictional Baní, that of Hostos’ “paréntesis etnológico” (Bani y la novela de Billini 103), Dominicans corrupted their imagined European legacy through contamination upon contact with tangible Caribbean materiality.

By the late nineteenth century the writing had lost a sense of reciprocity with the land. LeGrace Benson notes that when during the nation state building countries’ ecosystems entered the broadened scope of observation of primarily urban artists, this approach nonetheless did not challenge their dominant “perception of surrounding nature as ‘out there’ and ‘other’” (73). Apparently Billini’s
engagement with rural nature was more complex. He was an urban writer by training and spirit, which is why the narrator begins by providing a panoramic view of the Peravia valley and the town from the outside and above (37). Yet as a native of the Peravia valley, he is unable to break free and descends to continue meandering along the course of the picturesque Baní River. His wandering along the river as well as his lingering on the site demonstrate Billini’s more intense engagement with the local micro landscape and vegetation, and some feeble attempt to regain an intimate connection to the environment.

Nature was not completely “disenchanted” for Billini as various numinous energies inhabited the sacred land. When cruising some secluded nooks on the outskirts of Baní, he came closest to acknowledging his syncretic Catholic, African, indigenous, and Spiritist-Hindu inspirations:

Baní, ese pueblo de los sueños de mi juventud es el oasis donde mi espíritu recobra aliento y descarga las fatigas de sus pesadumbres, el confesionario donde mi alma habla con Dios y pide perdón de sus debilidades y ofrece la enmienda; el templo donde levanto mi oración; la piscina sagrada donde se purifica mi pensamiento; el arca de paz donde se reconcilia el corazón con la fe y la esperanza; el altar donde comulga mi amor a todo lo bueno para volver con fuerzas a luchar la vida de la virtud! (43)

This sentence assembles a bold series of oasis amid the desert, the confessionary, temple, sacred pool, and altar, which recognizes the plurality of worshipping practices converging in Baní. Remarkably, the narration integrates civic symbols such as the peace arch with other sacred places. However, Billini did not acknowledge his inspirations directly; while a sacred pool suggests a favored Taíno worshipping site, the least specific altar barely points toward Afro-Caribbean spirituality. This sentence also implies a tacit cultural appropriation. By being able to draw strength and stylistic variety from many sources indistinguishably, Billini pre-empted religions of their histories of resistance and lived experiences encoded in rites even when telling his least mediated encounters with the wilderness.

In the first four chapters, the narrator describes the beauty of Baní while framing Engracia and Antoñita within their “natural” environment; he links his protagonists to elements of nature to claim that “Las rosas cuando se ven prendidas de sus rosales, tienen un atractivo mayor” (28). As a landscape painter, Billini carefully selects advantaged angles to showcase his object in a favorable light. Baní is seen through the loving eyes of a returning exile and described with the reverence of the faithful. The anaphoric expression “he vuelto a él” (15, 21) rumbles across the first chapter and suggests parallels
between the town and the divine. The fourth chapter closes with the cliché of Baní as a paradise (43), yet, as Mark Anderson reminds us, “‘paradise’ is itself a versatile locus of discourse, rather than a fixed object, and it is ecological in that it embodies the conjunction of harmonious interrelations between humans and the environment, with an eye to optimal habitability” (211).

So, who inhabits this paradise and what makes Baní an optimal environment for them? The label of paradise and Arcadia might surprise readers as they contemplate the town comprised mainly of single mothers and daughters perhaps due to the post-revolutionary havoc and unstable cohabitations but most likely made up by Billini to pre-empt the issue of rivalry for women. Baní turns out to be a paradisiacal collection of girls of marriageable age for young elite men from Santo Domingo and possibly for the incipient tourist industry (89). Groups of such men, many of them letrado poets and Billini’s personal acquaintances (37), come as tourists to escape the noisy city, enjoy folkloric festivities and bucolic rides to the nearby campos, to sample local food staples, and to intermingle with young provincial women.

In the novel, the elite youth travel from the capital to the Peravia valley for something more than mere amusement; following the advice of medical geography and topography in vogue, they seek “influencias bienhechoras” of its climate that “tanto en lo físico como en lo moral, resucita del enfermo las fuerzas decaídas” (42). In the poem “Bani” (1860-62) dedicated to his “querido amigo” Billini and on which the latter modelled his take on the surrounding nature, José Joaquín Pérez of fifteen to seventeen years of age had described one such restorative journey to the provincial town: “Ya diviso tus colinas,/ya tus palmares diviso,/encantado paraíso/que en mis delirios soñé” (29). The lyrical narrator, in rather a trite manner tired of the bustle of modern life because in his native Santo Domingo “no brinda flores/sino abrojos el gozar” (29), retreats to the dreamed countryside. Like Billini’s narrator afterwards, he first contemplates Baní from the outside and above and compares it to a sonorous bird’s nest: “Con tus bohíos pintorescos/ en cuyos techos de cana/ cuando asoma la mañana / fulgura un sol tropical, / pareces movible nido, / colgado de las colinas, / mecido por las ondinas / de belleza sin igual” (30). In a mirror image, Billini transformed Pérez’s metaphor of a nest into that of an exuberant flower basket to stress the importance of Baní’s vegetation (37).

On the pages of Bani, hardy shrubs proliferate because the former thrive in semi-arid zones. The Trujillo’s courtier and successor Joaquín Balaguer interpreted Pérez’s verses “todo en torno
amarillece / y se ve mustio morir” (32) as proof that “nadie ha sentido con tanta intensidad como él la adusta y áspera poesía del yermo desolado (cit. in José Joaquín Pérez 33). To aestheticize unwelcoming ecosystems signifies the poet’s willingness to embrace his country as it is and possibly work toward improvement, which allows us to examine the part of wilderness, abject landscapes, and agriculture in Dominican nation building discourse. Thus Pérez represented an invigorating landscape vis-à-vis the robust nation that inhabited such sublime nature, while Billini departed from Pérez’s awe and stupor in front of the “tremendo, amenazador” torrent that sweeps everything away in its course (32).

In Billini the “yermo desolado” comes alive and lures the traveller, promising to yield its botanical secrets. After a rainy season, the crowfoot (“abrojos” despised by Pérez) together with other wild flowers draw his gaze away from the thorny bushes:

Por otros lados se prodigan los tendidos de fideos, bejuquillos color de naranja, que en hebras miles forman las cabelleras de oro con que se cubren, no solo el ver dor de algunos arbustos, sino también las zarzas y los guaos, exornando sus lechos con las guirnaldas de la preciosa flor de novios, como si en los tálamos nupciales debajo de las flores estuvieran las espinas. Y por último las trepadoras anónimas, que no conoció Linneo, especie de madreselvas y galaripsos, que entrelazándose las unas con los otros presentan las bóvedas gachas de sus enredaderas, donde los chicuelos van a sorprender dormidos a los simplones pajaritos. (41-42)

The narration suggests a movement from open space—a few lines above desolate and inhospitable—into the “tálamos nupciales” in which the flor de novios covers spikes with flowers. The unclassified and unclassifiable “trepadoras anónimas” create a treacherous verdant architecture that resembles “bóvedas gachas” and serves as trumps for simpleton birds. Local plants and flowers flourish in the novel, entangling the writing and intertwining typography. While some names appear in italics throughout the book, apparently to indicate dialectical denominations, many no less vernacular and bizarre names go in a non-italic font attesting to the tenuous dividing line between a dialectical and normalized meaning. The language itself tangles manifesting once again—as had become customary since colonial writing—its futile attempts to encompass the indominable variety of autochthonous species.

**Ethnobotany: Guazábara and Bayahonda Ecologies**
Manuel Rueda’s verses from the epigraph define limits of a generic borderline village “sin nombre”. The poet conceptualized “lo tenue de la línea que separa” the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Victoriano-Martínez 40), be it the Artibonito River “en el que dos brazadas no caben” (La criatura terrestre 28) or a living fence of guazábara and cambrón bushes (“Pueblo sin nombre” 273). Although their thorny branches scare off and arrest the circulation of European colonial chroniclers (“no traspasaron más los límites/de la guazábara y el cambrón/cronistas”), the shrubs do not hinder the movement of local rayano Dominicans. In Rueda guazábara and cambrón, or bayahonda (Prosopis juliflora, a type of mesquite) grow close—side by side—intertwisting their branches to delimit the permeable frontier, which constitutes a counterpoint to Billini’s landscape imagery that suggested guazábara and bayahonda ecologies as coextensive in the present yet incompatible. One (guazábara) must have been preserved in the wilderness as essential to the environmental equilibrium and national identity, while the other (bayahonda) was an invasive species from Haiti and must have been wiped out and substituted with fruit tree crops.

Is fiction a suitable medium for botany? In Baní, abundant plants at once hinder readability and interlace the dense plotting of the story that otherwise does not hold together and threatens to disintegrate. The text does ethnobotany in a very specific sense. As Catherine Fowler explains:

The prefix ethno as in ethnoecology, ethnoscience, and ethnobotany is used with two meanings. In the meaning originally intended in ethnobotany … it refers to ethnic, thus meaning the studies of the botany, science, or ecology of a particular ethnic group—something unique to the history of that group. However, in the sense in which it was originally used when the words ethnoscience and ethnoecology were coined in the 1950s and 1960s, ethno referred to the perceptions or views by the indigenous group of the phenomena in question. Here the meaning indicated by ethno was more a concept involving the cultural insider’s cognition, than an outsider’s observations. (13-4)
Since the indigenous Taíno had been deemed extinct in the Dominican Republic, Billini did not bother himself with the history of their knowledge as a distinct ethnic group. Yet if ethnobotany as a scientific discipline in the twentieth century associated, at least in theory, plants with “traditional” people and their cultures, turn-of-the-century literary discourse oftentimes legitimized itself through ethnobotany: dissatisfied with mere landscape imagery, the writing claimed for itself “the cultural insider’s cognition” of local plants. When his ethnobotanical knowledge did not suffice, Billini saturated his text with names, some of them in italics to emphasize—to a considerable dramatic effect—that he learnt to identify and classify the anarchic tropical vegetation surrounding the urban center.

Davis compares syncretic Dominican Espiritismo owing to Afro-Creole inspirations with Northern American spiritism and Afro-Brazilian Umbanda and Candomblé. She observes that in all of them there are indigenous entities (69); in Dominican Espiritismo specifically, the indigenous Taíno component includes not only spirits of caciques and historical figures but also “deidades productos de creaciones mitológicas” (78). Gómez also sustains that Afro-Caribbean ritual specialists absorbed a great deal of indigenous knowledge of the natural world: “These exchanges between blacks and Amerindians were based on a widespread notion in Caribbean spaces that nature was inhabited by numinous entities that could be made perceivable. The agglutination of the immaterial and the material into sensible realities was a basic tenet informing the informational exchanges that transpired between Caribbean early modern Amerindian and black ritual practitioners concerning the workings of the natural world” (67). This argument allows for a revisit of the debate around the exclusion of Blackness from the normalized Dominican discourse on nationality, epitomized by Galván’s Enriquillo in the nineteenth century.

I suggest that Dominican elites learnt the structural significance of Taíno for the consolidation of the new Creole community from Afro-Dominicans yet failed to acknowledge their guides. The ambiguity of the qualifier indio incorporated mixed-race Dominicans in the body politic while silencing Dominicans of darker skin tones. The cacique Guarocuya became acclaimed as Enriquillo in the Dominican Republic—despite his posterior inner rebellion whose inevitability Galván intuited well—because what mattered was his mestizaje. At the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, Enriquillo stands at once for the native inhabitants of the island and mixed-race Dominicans, his historical struggles doubling as tortuous ways of biological and cultural mestizaje and syncretism. The burden of representation weighs in, though, as Enriquillo does not look indio the way mixed-race Dominicans had
imagined themselves. His markedly indigenous features reveal the ruse of misrepresentation and Galván’s expropriation of the identity that had harboured *mestizaje*. Likewise Billini claimed indigenous ethnobotany as part of the national landscape and pharmacopeia, but skipped the role of Afro-Dominican ritual practitioners and the long period of time when they served as the main successors of Taíno healing cultures.

Engracia and Antoñita establish intimate yet opposed relations to plants. Engracia enjoys making girlish bouquets of “varitas de San José, y esas otras menudas y bellísimas parásitas, que allí llaman *cañuelas* y *angelitos*” (34). Hers are conventional and aesthetically appealing flowers: *varitas de San José*, or *malvas reales* (*Alcea rosea*, the hollyhock) and endemic Caribbean orchids: *cañuelas* (*Cyrtopodium punctatum*) and *angelitos* (*Oncidium variegatum*). Meanwhile, Antoñita teases her friend and exposes herself to the disguised danger and poison of the tropics: “Antoñita llenándose el labio de flores de *quibey*, (especie de azucenas hermosísimas, que encierran un veneno activo,) le llamaba la atención poniéndose delante: - ¡Antoñita! ¡no seas loca! gritaba Engracia llena de miedo quitándole las flores de la boca. Y otras veces en tanto que Engracia se ocupaba solicitamente en arreglar su ramillete, Antoñita se entretenía en cortar espinas de *guazábara* y traía a su casa ramas de guayacán en las manos” (34). Unlike Engracia and urban *letrado* tourists, Antoñita has discovered meaning beyond breathtaking landscapes and withering floral beauty. She manipulates potent substances: *quibey* (*Hippobroma longiflora*) contains two pyridine alkaloids (lobeline and nicotine) which are easily absorbed through the skin and mucous membranes of the mouth and cause psychoactive effects at small dosages. All three of Antoñita’s favourite plants have Taíno etymology and played important medicinal and cultural roles in indigenous pharmacopeias; for instance, both *quibey* and *guayacán* were well known for their anti-venereal/anti-syphilitic properties.

At the same time Antoñita, this time not unlike Engracia, toys around with nature melancholically: “se entretenía en cortar espinas de *guazábara*”. The cactus *guazábara* (*Cylindropuntia caribaea*) ranges from Bani to Pedernales (for instance, it grows in the Reserva Científica Monumento Natural Félix Servio Ducoudray). In Taíno *guazábara* means *quarrel, brawl, fight*. Billini positioned this cactus within its natural environment: “esos claros caldeados por la seca donde ostentan sus espinas, el cayuco, la tuna, la alpargata, y más que ninguna otra la guasábara, indígena de greñas erizadas, que de toda esa familia de caliente raza, es la más arisca … Y en esos cactus que tanto abundan en Baní y que tanto pincharon los dedos mios y los de mis compañeroitos de infancia al
robarles sus pomas color de grana y bermellón, aseguran algunos encontrar los asímiles productores de la rica y preciosa cochinilla” (40). Although guazábara used to prick his child’s fingers, it occupies a specific niche in the dry scrub ecosystem (matorral seco). Just as “andan juntos en el mundo la alegría y el dolor” (40), the thorny yet native (“indígena de greñas erizadas”) guazábara is an indispensable part of existence. It literally produces nourishment in the semi-arid soil (coveted pomas) and provides habitat to the lucrative cochineal insects.

By contrast, Billini associated bayahonda (Prosopis juliflora), which we saw in fraternal embrace with guazábara in Rueda, with Haiti, neglect of agriculture, and moral decline: “saltan a la vista los espaciosos patios, faltos por lo regular de árboles, con excepción de aquellos donde ha nacido la intrusa y repugnante ballahonda [sic], que los ingleses llevaron a Haití en el vientre de sus caballos y con la cual Haití nos viene invadiendo. En esos patios se nota el descuido, pues debían de estar sembradas las frutas y otras plantas útiles, y las señoritas deberían de cultivar en ellos hermosos jardines” (341). He presented bayahonda as an invasive species that spread uncontrollably due to the colonization of the Caribbean. Yet Billini did not blame the English for the man-made ecological imbalance because they brought the exotic seed inadvertently, “en el vientre de sus caballos”. Nor was he exactly preoccupied with bayahonda’s displacing other native species. Like in García Godoy’s earlier piece “La cuestión haitiana”, Billini assumed that Haitians switched from earlier military tactics to the deployment of “soft” botanical weapons to conquer “palmo a palmo el terreno deseado” (García Godoy Obras casi completas 40). If in Godoy, though, Haitians intend to absorb Dominicans by something like infiltrating Dominican customs and sensibilities, through the haitianizar of the country, Billini imagined bayahonda as a noxious species so difficult to weed that it exhausts the physical and moral endurance of Bani’s señoritas. While guazábara grows and yields fruit in the dry scrub, Billini relegated the bayahonda shrub thriving, in theory, in a similar biome to the household patio.

In Haiti bayawonn (bayahonde in French) is a primary source of economically essential charcoal and is partially kept in check by frequent harvesting and adverse geographical conditions. Bayawonn provides shade, fodder, and timber, prevents erosion and desertification, improves soil quality, and is rich in alkaloids, flavonoids, and tannins, which perhaps accounts for its prominent place in vodou rites. In Haitian poetry, though, created by urban secular Francophone writers about the Kreyol-speaking peasants practicing vodou, the image of bayahonde is disturbingly ambiguous. For
instance, the lyrical narrator in Philippe Thoby-Marcelin’s poem “Croix-des-Missions, Port-au-Prince” (1928) describes his trip on a rural bus on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince:

\[
\text{Route blanche et chaude et pierreuse et qui monte et qui descend}
\]

\[
\text{Bordée de bayahondes. (1386)}
\]

The sight of hardy bayahondes growing negligently on the roadside enhances the sensation of discomfort and sultriness. The poetic voice associates these trees with backwardness and poverty while dissociating himself from peasants for whom bayahonde is vital:

\[
\text{Joyeux propos des passagers rustauds; mais je refuse ma vie au groupe.}
\]

\[
\text{Et cet air de midi torride m’engourdit. Et ma pensée se délestant vagabonde sur les cahots de la guimbarde qui récite:}
\]

\[
\text{“Bayahondes, Bayahondes, Bayahondes…”}
\]

\[
\text{La route fait le gros dos.}
\]

\[
\text{On débouche et sur quel paysage! Frondaisons de manguiers ouvrent large un lit.}
\]

\[
\text{Au fleuve vert des cannes à sucre. (1386)}
\]

The lyrical narrator equals uneducated rustic chatter to gossiping, from which he distances himself. Instead he sinks into the visual and felt (bumpy) landscape and observes its hypnotic, numbing effect on his thinking. This suburban landscape is dominated by bayahondes and is interiorized to the point that the peasants’ gossiping turns into endless recitation “Bayahondes, / Bayahondes, / Bayahondes…” while the bus descends the road. The poem’s typography repeats the bus’ downward movement, assisted by the perceptible echo of “hondes” at the end of each line. At the turn of the road the idle lands stay behind while, to the narrator’s joy, such traditional agricultural staples as mango trees and sugar cane fields replace bayahondes. Benson claims that the brothers Pierre Marcelin and Philippe Thoby-Marcelin “could include a sacred mapou tree as a central figure in their 1946 novel, \textit{La bete de Musseau (The Beast of the Haitian Hills)}, with intimate understanding of the peasants’ beliefs. An
observant agronomist, Pierre could recognize a Vodou sensibility that understands the tree to be inhabited with spirits. Yet the brothers kept as emotionally distant from the religion itself as would an anthropologist” (71). Paradoxically, intensive monocultural farming—Thoby-Marcelin’s breathtaking, voluptuous landscape—would be responsible, among other reasons, for deforestation, soil deterioration, and by and large serious ecological challenges in the twentieth century.20

Scholars debate whether *Prosopis juliflora* is a native or imported species introduced to Hispaniola from Central or northern South America, admitting that even in this case “the species probably has been in the Caribbean since before recorded history” (Timyan 3). Pratiksha Patnaik, Tasneem Abbasi, and S. A. Abbasi study the introduction of *P. juliflora* in arid regions of India since the second half of the nineteenth century—Sri Lanka, Australia, and Hawaii Island followed—“to benefit from the ease with which *P. juliflora* could grow in harsh arid environments” (458).21 Despite the fact that the introduction of *bayahonda* was intentional and global in scope, Billini insisted on Haiti’s instrumentality in the process (“con la cual Haití nos viene invadiendo”). Taken to regions “where it has lesser competition and greater security (from grazer/predators)” (Patnaik et al. 455) and later paired with decolonization efforts, *P. juliflora* has been described in subjective terms of invasion and colonization.

In Billini, *bayahonda* renders the land idle and the señoritas immoral through relaxing their agricultural zeal. The correspondence between physical and moral nature, between race and goodness is undeniably ubiquitous in nineteenth-century Caribbean literature. However, Billini went further and metaphorically transferred racial tensions onto the eco-language of foreign and endemic species, which elevated indigenous ethnobotany yet dispossessed Afro-Creole ritual practitioners of their histories of interactions with Taino pharmacopeias and other local plants. Dead bouquets of guayacán replaced both Afro-indigenous living trees inhabited by spirits of the dead and hollyhocks and exotic orchids coveted by Europeans.

**Espiritismo and Dematerialization of Afro-Creole Rites**

Lo moral es tanto o más contagioso que lo material.

—Francisco Gregorio Billini
When Black characters (“gente de color”) take to the stage in the novel, they threaten to disrupt the festivity of Our Lady of Regla (126). Their presence turns political because, as Dominican citizens, they demand their fair share of the public space, which a representative group of youths from Bani and Santo Domingo denies to them. Black Banilejos request to book the Salon of the Comandancia de Armas to hold their baile the night after the official one took place. The White and mixed-race—Hispanic—youths denigrate their compatriots by calling their fiesta “bureos” and “fandangos” (129). “Alegres, parleras, reídas” Banilejas, most of whom cannot dance nor play music well, according to Billini (101), also dismiss their fellow Black villagers’ baile as “fiestas malas” (85). Don Postumio first intercedes on behalf of the Blacks and in a naïve liberal manner inquires whether there are “por ventura clases privilegiadas en la República” (128). Don Postumio is the principal comic character in the novel—a madman who always speaks his mind regardless of consequences. Both the revolutionary rebels (214) and the liberal government (247) imprison him as an enemy. Yet when faced with social disintegration of some Hispanic community in Bani, even this ingenuous character resorts to a problematic tactic.

At the same time the Blacks renounce their religious music and dance to disprove of the dismissive qualifier of the bureo and fandango and to comply with the definition of a formal baile, the “first-class” Hispanics gather together at Don Postumio’s doorstep to “velar el árbol” and enjoy the sounds of the traditional tiple guitar and tambourines as they resonate through the village (134). The narrative insists on this custom (48, 114) that seems to parody African and African-inspired social gatherings around the sacred baobab or Afro-indigenous ceiba tree. If in Afro-Creole rites it is a living tree on a tomb that channels the dead and assures the continuity of the living, Billini’s folkloric “árbol iluminado” is cut down in the campos, and youths gather around to keep a mock vigil. The mockery is manifold. On the one hand, the vigil is for a tree and not for a person while the abundance of food and liquors and excesses associated with them suggest and mock actual Afro-Creole vigils. Despite such disparaging handling of the other’s culture, the tree’s vigil plays a vital role in the text for, not unlike African-inspired rites, it restores disbalanced communal bonds among “first-class” Hispanics. While the Blacks dance among themselves in the Salon of the Comandancia, the Hispanic youngsters enjoy themselves at the house of the Comandante, reaffirming their intimate connections to power.

When in jail in Santo Domingo, Don Postumio adopts Espiritismo, which, I argue, serves as a mirror image of Billini’s own narrative strategy of appropriation of all things Afro-Creole. The spatial
organization of the jail *La Fuerza* exemplifies the flexibility of the notion of race in the Dominican Republic. The spatial hierarchy repeats the racial hierarchy operative in the society as the cells improve from the Room of El Indio to El Mulato to the Salon. At the same time, their negative materiality of filth, humidity, and odors fades away progressively: from “sucias y húmedas paredes” (248) of El Indio to better living conditions but stinky inmates of El Mulato to more refined political prisoners in the Salon, nasty supporters of Buenaventura Báez perhaps still smelly of rum (252). Also the jail cells deprive their inmates differently on a sensorial level. If in El Indio Don Postumio has no company, in El Mulato he has no bed, beddings, nor fresh air. In the Salon his political adversaries surround him, and the guards do not allow books. The inmate who passes Allan Kardec’s *Obras Fundamentales del Espiritismo* to Don Postumio is described as “un hombre ya entrado en años, alto, flaco, y a quien los otros compañeros de cárcel tenían por chiflado” (252). Yet despite contrasting material, specifically the sensorial conditions of detention, Don Postumio is interned in all three rooms alternately regardless of his elevated social position and being White. Racial categories within the jail system imitate the existing social order because they arbitrarily assign race together with a degree of vulnerability.

The dematerialization of the jail structures of deprivation and the skinny, spiritual guardian of Kardec’s work strangely repeat the dematerialization of African-inspired religions in Espiritismo itself. Arcadio Díaz Quiñones proposes Espiritismo as a code through which to reread the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz and his never-complete breakaway from positivism: “Ortiz, como otros intelectuales en Europa y América, se sintió muy atraído por la religión letrada representada por *El libro de los espíritus* o *El Génesis*, los milagros y las predicciones según el espiritismo, de Kardec, y por la mediación posible entre la ciencia y la ‘religión popular’” (296). Such disparate authors as Leopoldo Lugones, Rubén Darío, Eduardo Zamacois, Fernando Ortiz, and Haya de la Torre, and political projects of the like of José Martí and Francisco Madero showed interest in Espiritismo due to its syncretism that combined positivist science and belief in human progress with transcendentalism and folk religions. Díaz Quiñones examines the indebtedness of Ortiz’s concept of transculturation to that of Kardec’s of transmigration of souls. In the Dominican context we have already seen that Francasci discredited Emiliano Tejera because despite being a pharmacist and scientist he believed in the transmigration of souls.

Since Billini had the Archbishop Meriño as an editor-censor, he took precautions to declare about Espiritismo that “He querido pasar rozando sobre materias tan arduas, y, sin declararme por
nadie, dejo la tesis al lector” (Baní y la novela de Billini 264). In the course of their correspondence, Meriño disapproved of a passionate farewell letter written by a future nun to Enrique Gómez and Don Postumio’s divorce advocacy (255, 258), as well as of small orthographic (262), semantic (268), and syntactic irregularities (265, 270) that allegedly revealed an irreverent narrative treatment of the Church. Surprisingly he was not at all bothered by Espiritismo. Although Espiritismo can be interpreted as a “dissident” practice at odds with Catholicism (Caimari 202), Dominican ecclesiastic authorities tolerated Espiritismo behind the scenes for several reasons. First, Espiritismo promised to dematerialize and dispossess Afro-Creole rites of Black cultural identity and hence mitigate political resistance rooted in Afro-Caribbean narratives. Second, Europe set the precedent and conferred prestige to Espiritismo, and lastly, Espiritismo was an easy aim of ridicule as Don Postumio’s story demonstrates. Billini claimed that “hoy novela sin controversia cae en frío. La novela de hoy para causar efecto quiere intención y discusión” (Baní y la novela de Billini 258). However, Billini admitted his extremely superficial knowledge of the precepts of Espiritismo, perhaps discussed with Tejera (Baní y la novela de Billini 264). When Don Postumio tries to indoctrinate Antoñita, this provincial and commonsensical girl, though rather literate, is capable of refuting most of Kardec’s postulates. Billini was primarily fascinated with the ease with which Espiritismo appealed to liberals like Don Postumio and Tejera and invested in its potential to dissolve the close bond of the material and the spiritual, their reciprocity in Afro-Creole rites from within popular spirituality and healing practices.

Reinaldo Román examines the distinction between espiritistas and espiriteros in turn-of-the-century Puerto Rico. The lettered espiritistas demonstrated a “zeal for modernity” (Alvarez-Curbelo) and differentiated themselves from vulgar and allegedly backward espiriteros: “The most visible symptom of this state [backwardness] included ignorance, evident in illiteracy and in the use of uncouth language in speech and spirit communications; in superstition, manifest in the use of candles, icons, altars, and holy water; and less directly, in blackness” (Román 109). Román then tracks the public debate around the jíbara healer Julia Vázquez, La Samaritana of San Lorenzo in the early 1920s. He argues that “Rather than reconciling Catholic and Spiritist notions of health, affliction, and regeneration, La Samaritana revealed that when it came to healing, there was a plurality of understandings at work” (117). Although first espiritistas sought a social and political regeneration of community rather than individual healing, with time “practices originating at the bottom were also taken up at the top once their origins had been obscured” (112). This process of symbolic appropriation
and “obscuring,” or even substitution of lineage are evident in Billini’s promotion of Dominican folklore as one of the pillars of Hispanism.

However, the claiming of the philosophical nature of “true” Espiritismo, not unlike the reimagining of pharmacy as a scientific discipline, ran into an adaptability of Afro-Creole rites. Davis proposes the concept of “espiritismo material” to stress the impulse to reject the material in the case of urban, depurated, and “elevated” Espiritismo as well as the definite failure to do so since Espiritismo “aun en sus manifestaciones más puras e intelectuales, forma un extremo del espectro comprendido por el ‘vodú’ dominicano definido en el sentido más amplio” (70). With time the material resurfaced and Espiritismo reaffirmed itself as a folk religion and medical practice, yet the ongoing discursive attack on the material resulted in the silencing of complex histories of Dominican syncretism, specifically its African inspirations.

**Apotheosis of Libidinal Competition: Heliotropes in Baní**

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Nigra sum, sed formosa, filiæ Jerusalem, sicut tabernacula Cedar, sicut pelles Salomonis.

Nolite me considerare quod fusca sim, quia decoloravit me sol.

—Vulgate

As we have seen, Billini imagined the model national landscape as dry scrub (*matorral seco*), a liminal zone between the sensual tropical coastline and the mountain forest that used to shelter fugitive slaves. Instead of José Joaquín Pérez or the Cuban José María Heredia’s emblematic palm tree, Billini chose the humble and thorny *guazábara* to represent his country. His semidesert suggests an ecstatic landscape awaiting a few drops of rain to change into a delectable meadow dotted with flowers whose apparent simplicity must not deceive the reader as they disguise potent stimulants. In this way Billini reinterpreted dry scrub as an allegory for a future transformation of the social landscape once the devastating civil wars ended (*Bani* 342).

However, the plant of heliotrope is out of place in this endemic environment. The heliotrope is an essential European poetic icon, which Peter W. Travis considers to be a once-popular metametaphor (171). In other words, before a rose was a rose was a rose was a rose, heliotrope occupied the transitional space between the material world and linguistic signification. By heliotrope, writers from
Pliny to Ovid to Boccaccio to the French bards of the marguerite (Guillaume Machaut, Jean Froissart, and Eustache Deschamps) to Chaucer meant both a concrete flower (or gemstone in Boccaccio) and yet any flower whose roots firmly grasp the soil while the blossoms follow the trajectory of the sun: “while thrusting its roots deep into a world of prelogical materiality, metaphor is involved in an equally strenuous movement in the direction of postlogical transcendency” (Travis 179). This reflected the nature of metaphor, the “arc of its back-and-forth movement through analogical space” (Travis 183) midway between “becoming the object again” (Mansell 116) and yearning for the ultimate “sensory signifier” (Derrida 228). If followed with the deconstructive zeal, the thrust after this stable solar signifier only reveals that the sun itself—or, in Billini’s case, the construct of European folklore itself—is mobile and unstable. Thus, Derrida concluded that “metaphor means heliotrope, both a movement toward the sun and the turning movement of the sun” (251). In the eighteenth century, Karl Linnaeus cut short this intense poetic search for the mystic flower by fixing heliotrope as a botanical genus of Heliotropium. Yet by that time poets had managed to turn common and unpretentious flowers such as the sunflower, marguerite, or daisy into philosophical metaphors, enticing the reader’s marvel and pursuit through the heliotrope’s elusive simplicity. As a result of this poetic tradition, the heliotrope has functioned in Europe and elsewhere at the intersection of folk iconicity and “high” culture, disturbing and subverting their binary.

Now, what does the heliotrope transplanted into the Dominican soil signify? I argue that by means of this authoritative solar trope Billini sought to incorporate the drive and appeal of folklore, the burgeoning global field of inquiry at the time, into the Dominican lettered culture to energize the latter’s dating style and to make sensuous folk aesthetics and cosmology available to the elite reader. The major issue, of course, was that he attempted to supress Afro-Dominican sensory landscapes in the process; the same persistent drumming and the festive loosening of the self García Godoy would despise, Billini sought to substitute with libidinous European-inspired folk elements ranging from Christian feasts to music to pharmacy, all of which he reinvented for this purpose. Thus, he presented both his personal creative work and outrageous cultural appropriations as a collective syncretic labour of transculturation.

Certainly, it could be argued that heliotrope was a rather popular plant in Caribbean horticulture and imagery of the period. For instance, the young Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, Puerto Rican writer and another translator of Spiritist poetics into the Caribbean context, composed a Romantic legend about
the allegorical meaning of heliotrope back in 1848 (included in the *Almanaque-Aguinaldo* edition of 1860). Like in the metamorphosis of Clytie in Ovid, in this legend Tapia y Rivera closely followed the transfiguration of a loving woman into the heliotrope, which is simultaneously a concrete flower of the genus *Heliotropium* and a signifier meaning “yo te amo”, an amorous inscription on the agonizing body. Unlike Billini, Tapia y Rivera did not pursue the process of transculturation; instead he transcribed the decorous libidinous economy in which eroticism degraded into agony. I argue that Billini went further and organized his narration along the two opposite vectors of the heliotrope tradition—telluric and solar, inward and outward—which had been lost, or irrelevant, in Tapia y Rivera’s account. In *Bani* a godmother, symptomatic of European folklore, brings in the heliotrope as a gift. Most of the abundant flowers that adorn Billini’s novel are either native to Hispaniola or invasive species like *bayahonda*, but heliotrope makes a journey through the novel. As an indoor plant first, it is as if foreign to Bani. However, Engracia repeats that she will transplant her pot (65, 66), and after readapting to its new environment in the end the heliotrope is growing outdoors in a palisade.

The heliotrope stimulates Engracia’s incipient interiority and has a bearing on the writing by increasing ambiguity of expression and hence condensing the texture. The proximity of the heliotrope allows erotic fantasies to surface in Engracia’s otherwise chaste bosom similarly to how Billini’s otherwise hygienic writing slips into hallucination and impropriety in the nearness of aphrodisiac, immodest vegetation. In a masturbatory delusion Engracia imagines her amorous surrender:

Aquel regalo de su madrina le había traído el recuerdo de su gatito negro, que tanto la hizo gozar y que tantas lágrimas le costó. Pero pensando en el resultado final de aquel episodio, la matita despertaba en ella una sensación agradable. Al mirarla tan cuajada de flores y tan hermosa se le alegraba el espíritu. Luego pensó en el significado de estas … “¡Ay! ¡si yo amara y me amaran!”—se dijo para sí.—Y calentada su imaginación en la fragua de esos soliloquios, después de algunos momentos ya en alta voz, como si hablara con alguna persona, exclamó …” (65)

Since childhood, Engracia has inscribed herself into production and trading cycles. She sells her first affection off for a greater benefit. In this passage she remembers exchanging another of her godmother’s gifts, a pet kitten (“gatito negro”), for a heifer that soon gives birth to calves that are, in turn, exchanged for material goods (32-3). Engracia mediates and manipulates reproduction and in this
way distances herself from the traditional role of child-bearing. The memory of the symbolic animal sacrifice and the resulting profit exacerbates her imagination as she immerses herself in the forge of erotic fantasy. While reciting Biblical verses from the Song of Songs, Engracia feels “como quien se baña en un manantial de ternura” (65). After outside noises wake her up from her rapture (“arrobamiento”), “bañada de inefable sonrisa la inmutación de su semblante” Engracia “abrió cuán grandes eran sus verdes ojos, y con el dedo índice puesto en el labio, se quedó en el sitio, silenciosa, contrada, ruborizada, como si la hubieran descubierto al cometer un delito” (66). Engracia is possessed before she sees her homme fatal for the first time; Enrique Gómez merely happens to overhear her daydream of the moment when she, after heliotrope, gives the aroma of her heart away to a beloved.

In the novel’s distribution of the sensible, Engracia personifies mythical pagan European roots. Engracia’s sensual pleasure derives from vegetation and the earth (later the reader will see her look for treasure and literally dig in the dirt). The closeness of the heliotrope’s roots seduces Engracia and intensifies her pleasure: “como se hallaba sola en la salita de su casa, junto a la mesa en donde había colocado el tiesto lleno de la tierra que daba vida a las raíces del heliotropo, ya olvidada de que la pudieran oír …” (65). She cannot separate from her pot with the heliotrope and carries it along even as she leaves Bani for the nearby hato La Montería (237). So much does Engracia cherish her folk roots that it is no longer clear whether she worships the Christian God or the heliotrope. At the moment of extreme danger, when words do not suffice, she resorts to “grito”, the ultimate “recurso de aquellos que no pueden expresarse, y aun de los que saben transmitir su entusiasmo” (43) and outcries: “¡Dios mío! ¡sálvalo!—exclamó Engracia, cayendo de rodillas junto al tarro del heliotropo” (238). Once her marriage expectations fail, Engracia auto-exiles in the countryside where “Su única diversión es el esmero con que cultiva el pequeño huerto en donde tiene sembrado un hermoso rosal, entre una reata formada de matitas de heliotropo” (335). This reata as if ties Engracia like her rosebushes within the permeable living fence of heliotropes from which she is unwilling to break free.

In Billini’s allegory, the charm of Engracia’s green eyes (“como las yerbitas que nacen a la orilla del arroyuelo de Peravia”) arises from the power of a magical circle and dried sprigs (“ramitos”) of heliotrope in addition to that of a philter and spellbinding aroma. Dried plants point in too many directions and erode any sense of unity Billini attempted to imbue his narrative with. On the one hand, dried sprigs evoke an elaborate epistolary form while herbaria are reminiscent of the growing scientific empiricism and prestigious learned societies in Europe. Yet in Caribbean cultures the same bouquets
suggest yerbas de indios. Within the European context the dried heliotrope refers to the Magi esoteric knowledge, the understanding of which, in turn, shifted with time from Eastern mysticism to Black magic. Still, Pliny the Elder recorded in his *Historia Naturalis* that the Orient-inspired Magi recommended that “the patient himself should tie on himself heliotropium, four pieces if the ague [fever] be quartan and three if it be tertian, and to say in prayer that he will untie the knots only when the fever has left him, and to lie in bed without taking the plant off” (Book XXII 337). Engracia peppers her countless love letters to Enrique with heliotrope, yet in the modern, urban, and disenchanted milieu of Santo Domingo, Enrique remains indifferent to her charms. The proliferation of cultural codes signals the arbitrariness and futility of Billini’s aesthetics that sought to fixate the heliotrope and, by extension, the sun on the European terrain. The history of proximities and coproduction of knowledge contrasts with the imperialist impulse of the Enlightenment that defined Africa negatively as the Dark Continent and pretended to take over the latter’s long-established solar symbolism.

Billini “whitewashed” the heliotrope tradition and to this end relied on cumbersome narrative structures, almost grotesque in the middle of the godforsaken countryside of Bani. The dialectic two-polar structure of heliotrope brings the two best friends Engracia (roots) and Antoñita (blossom following the sun’s trajectory) close together, almost to the point of merging their personalities: their differences “resultan ser afinidades, pues en el fondo se parecían, se condudían, se cambiaban” (34). Yet the same structure holds them back at opposite ends. As we have seen, Don Postumio is another key dialectical figure whose function is to dematerialize and dissolve Afro-Dominican embodied religions in Europeanized Espiritismo while retaining and claiming their numinous energies for the hegemonic national discourse. Not surprisingly, Antoñita is his unfaithful disciple. Unlike earthly-minded Engracia, Antoñita bathes in the sun and reaches to the ever-elusive logos. The constant disputes between Don Postumio and Antoñita, and even his confusion when he misreads Antoñita to be in love with him, indicate the restless labour of dialectical sense-making through oppositional differentiation and the following confounding of meanings.

To complicate his poetics further, Billini drew upon the “heliotropia/heliotropium configuration” (Travis 199) which consists of the esoteric combination of gem (*heliotropia*) and plant (*heliotropium*). In a comparably ambiguous move, Pliny disapproved of, yet copied the Magi’s formula for the sake of knowledge transmission: “we have quite the most blatant instance of effrontery on the
part of the Magi, who say that when the heliotrope plant is joined to the stone and certain prayers are pronounced over them the wearer is rendered invisible” (XXXVII 299). The medieval lapidaries, which either directly or indirectly inspired the European poets, also sustained that “if a heliotropic gem were ever situated under the plant of the same name in such a fashion that the former could not be see, the “owner” of this weird configuration would become invisible, or worse, suddenly disappear!” (Travis 199).29 The raffle could not be more emblematic during the *juego del canastillo* invented by Antoñita as Engracia randomly picks two symbols—heliotrope and ruby (123). Although strictly speaking bloodstone, and not ruby, is known as heliotrope nowadays, in the esoteric tradition *heliotropia* was essentially an unknown gem; moreover, it was believed that besides symbolizing the sun, ruby cannot be hidden and shines through even the thickest clothing. As soon as Engracia personifies “Heliotropo o rubí”—the text insists on capital letters for flower names because they substitute girls’ real names while the disjunctive conjunction hints at the gems property to activate chemical reactions rather than being hermetic symbols—she figuratively disappears. Enrique experiences no problem taking Antoñita to the Cuban-style *ambigú*, dancing with her, courting his fiancée’s best friend, and seducing her with his poetry collection *Páginas íntimas* (123). Not the aroma of heliotrope but Enrique Gómez’s distilled spirit, his writing, or rather his very capability of writing proper of the *letrado* subject enchants Antoñita. The “*heliotropia/heliotropium* configuration” as if deactivates Engracia’s spell.

Billini suggested that Engracia and Antoñita transport the transplanted and transcultured heliotrope within themselves, interiorizing intricate ethnobotanical symbolism, stories and histories behind which they ignore, misunderstand, and misuse. Derived from a questionable gift by a folkloric godmother, this plant cannot help arousing suspicion amidst abundant—and highly-esteemed by Billini—native and more potent species like *quibey*. Again the heliotrope structure is incongruent with a neglected semi-rural overgrown with weeds plaza in Bani where unshorn sheep bleat (342), making readers wonder in vain—perhaps not unlike Enrique once out of reach—what this is all about. Paradoxically Billini accomplished his mission: his novel has become authoritative of late nineteenth-century Dominican folklore and serves as “proof” that by the end of the nineteenth century White Dominican popular traditions, originating in Europe and transfigured upon historical encounters with the Taino, had eclipsed “minimal” Afro-Dominican presence. This is yet another myth of rampant nationalism that I hope to have debunked.

**The Virgin of Regla, or Whose are the Mountains?**
Por fin va la última prueba. El 12 saldrá el parto de los montes.

—Billini

The structure of the heliotrope rooted in the dirt yet reaching out to the divine, transcendent sun highlights another important solar image in Baní, that of Our Lady of Regla whose fiesta patronal constitutes one of the focal points in the novel. According to the colonial record, a humble hermitage “de tablas y hojas de palma” dedicated to Our Lady of Regla from around 1740 predated and contributed to the foundation of the town in the vicinity in 1764 (Baní y la novela de Billini 26). As late as in 1941, Santiago Incháustegui registered that common Banilejos took pride in and sang Regla’s Blackness in a popular gozo in her honour: “Aunque negra sois hermosa / pues sois hechura de Dios / que al encarnar dejó en Vos / la imagen más prodigiosa” (Baní y la novela de Billini 173). Billini took no chances and attempted to dissociate Dominican Virgin of Regla from the Black patroness of the Havana bay and municipality of Regla, before Guaicanamar, located across the bay from the capital city (Baní 233). Scholar and Miami Lucumí priest Miguel “Willie” Ramos calls the town of Regla “Africa’s heart in Cuba” (9). African-born family friends from Yorubaland, Adeshina (Ño Remigio Herrera), Anabi, and Atanda, founded the Cabildo Yemayá in Regla in 1866 to worship the Santería lucumi, or Regla de Ocha goddess Yemayá under the Catholic guise of Regla. Elizabeth Perez sustains that “In the 1880s cabildos de nación throughout Cuba has started to die out, a result of repressive legislation, while those in Regla only increased in vigor and number” (212) 30. Around the time Billini wrote his novel the Virgin of Regla was gaining her political momentum in Cuba.

The legend attributes the statue of the Virgin of Regla in the coastal village Chipiona, near Cádiz to the African-born church father Augustine of Hippo, who carved himself or commissioned the image of Mary for his oratory in the city of Thagaste, present-day Algeria. After his death, his disciple Cipriano fled Africa and brought with him the effigy. The sea passage to the coast of Cádiz was tempestuous, leading Cipriano to believe that Regla interfered on his behalf and helped his crew reach their destination. In the surroundings of Cádiz, the Augustine monks adopted the miraculous image as their patroness. According to the mythical account, the statue was buried at the beginning of the Moors’ occupation and not unearthed until the final stages of the Reconquista in the early fourteenth century (Aracil and Martínez 105).

This legend is part of an inventio of tradition “in the sense of discovering certain forms and interpreting their historical significance in terms of current motivations and needs” (Scheer 1433).
Monique Scheer departs from the prevailing study of intentions, or lack thereof, behind the creation of specific Black/Blackened Madonnas and focuses on the nuances of theological and, above all, popular perception of these images. Since her main interest is in the German-speaking areas, Scheer frames their perception in terms of two crucial moments: the Counter-Reformation’s veneration of ancient, time-tested relics in opposition to Reformation iconoclasm and the revaluation of their racial underpinnings in terms of new scientific discourse since the late eighteenth century. Even if some Virgin’s faces blackened by accident due to chemical reactions with paint, candle, and incense smoke and soot (in addition to the original dark colour of some carving wood such as ebony or cedar associated with the Eastern Mediterranean), these transformations required time, which taught Jesuits specifically that the blackened images were perceived as old and traditional. In combination with legendary narratives of the images’ lineage to Africa, the Catholic Church claimed their authenticity and likely produced and aged on purpose many more Black Madonnas. However, the connection between the colour of the image and the depicted Virgin was either not established at all or interpreted symbolically. Yet as the Counter-Reformation’s zeal decreased, and the concept of race grew popular, devotees of the black/blackened images of the Virgin started questioning the racial and ethnic background of Mary, which led the Church to reinterpret their blackness again, this time as accidental and void of meaning.

The cult of Regla arrived in Latin America and the Caribbean with Spanish conquistadors and colonizers. Julie Parella Anderies examines the main factors of the propagation of this Marian image in such Spanish colonies as the Canary Islands, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and the Philippines. First, the Pérez de Gúzman and Ponce de Léon families, instrumental in the conquest and colonization of the New World and specifically the Dominican Republic, were renowned devotees of Regla and had helped establish her cult in Andalusia. Second, the Virgin of Regla is believed to have special healing powers and is considered a patron of seafarers. In Bani, Regla dispels the charm and undoes the magical knot of the heliotropia-heliotropium combination that ties Antoñita to Enrique despite her rational repulse towards him (295-6): “Antoñita, después de sus fervorosos ruegos a la Virgen … no volvió a sentir los accesos de la fiebre de ese amor que tanto mal le había hecho … Muchas veces se creyó completamente curada” (306). Furthermore, the exact location of the Virgin of Regla’s original sanctuary in the town of Chipiona at “just a few miles downriver from the important port of trade of Sanlúcar de Barrameda which connected the Mediterranean with the Atlantic” and
hence “at the last point of Spanish land seen before setting sail for the New World and the first point fixed upon by returning voyagers” (Anderies 27) determined her prominent place in the cross-Atlantic navigation. Billini must have suspected this fact since he inquired specifically about the province of Spain “que primero le rindió culto” (Bani y la novela de Billini 252).

The third yet undoubtedly most important reason for Regla’s popularity in the countries with predominant or significant Black presence refers to her colour. Even prior to Linnaeus’ and Johann Friedrich Blumenback’s theories of race, free and enslaved, Black and mixed-race populations of the Hispanic Caribbean perceived the Virgin of Regla as being of African descent. Perez argues that “the power of the Regla figure” was due to “its ‘visual peculiarity,’ inviting Afro-Cubans to perceive her color (negra) as a sign of race (Negro), and to see her as one of themselves” (202) in addition to encoding the “productive and reproductive labor of women of color” (207). Therefore, her dark skin and some attributes, such as slave chains, have been reinterpreted in the New World. Initially the chains referred to the miracle performed by Regla when she freed Christian prisoners from the Moor prisons in Granada (Aracil and Martinez 140); which is why during the Reconquest she was largely associated with the release of Christian prisoners from Moors. Yet in Cuba, Regla was believed to unshackle chains and free African slaves brought in by Spanish and Creole colonists.

While Engracia’s heresy and worshipping of heliotrope eventually bounds her to the outskirts of the new, in theory urban social formation, Antoñita transcends her condition and, though eventually self-exiled and socially invisible for she rarely goes out, places herself at the center of her household and, by extension, Baní and the Dominican nation. She literally invents new traditions (103, 120) and, at some point, leads the religious procession of Our Lady of Regla (95). Although she draws inspiration from the fervor of festive embodied African inspiration, the light of European authority—“Raudales y torrentes de luz” prescribed by Victor Hugo to illuminate “la sociedad en las regiones interiores” (Baní 338)—paradoxically obscures and delegitimizes her Afro-Dominican sources, conceptually alienating the sun and logos from African diasporas.

The novel maps and expropriates Afro-Dominican sacred spaces. Against the grain of popular legends, Billini reimagined the place in which some Francisca la Francisquera found the image of the Virgin of Regla. He moved the scene to La Montería, old hato ganadero to the Northwest of Baní (233), which ambiguously suggested both mountainous territories where maroons used to hide and later
founded their settlements such as La Vereda, El Limonal, Los Montes Banilejos, and San José de Ocoa (Tejeda Ortiz San Juan Bautista 52), and the economic unit that itself relied on slave labour. The informal segregation Afro-Dominicans endured at best until the end of Trujillato divided the Baní region into coastal “campos blancos” (Paya Arriba, Bocacanasta, El Llano, Sombrero, Matanzas, Sabana Buey, El Cañafistol) and northern “campos negros”, the very town being zoned later into Pueblo Abajo, reserved for what racists considered to be “la buena sociedad del pueblo” (Baní 45), and Pueblo Arriba where Black and poor mixed-race populations concentrated. Francisco Xavier Billini Brea in his fictionalized historical biography Juan Manuel: Baní, el amargo café y las montoneras (published posthumously in 2002) documented that “Cuando Lilís visitaba a Baní y se celebraban festivales en su honor, censuraba que no concurriera un solo negro. Sin embargo, respetando las costumbres banilejas, que él no quería alterar por la fuerza, prohibía a sus oficiales negros tomar parte en los bailes” (88). Tejeda Ortiz sustains that the well-off Hispanic community policed recreational activities specifically so that even if any darker-skinned person “con influencia en la comunidad” or foreign to Baní happened to attend a baile, hardly any White woman dared to dance with him under the threat of being “sancionada con el desprecio y la indiferencia colectiva” (Chuines 30).

Although of scarce aesthetic merit, Juan Manuel constitutes a curious source of historical information because it chronicles the progressive growth of coffee plantations and the settlement of the nearby mountain valleys—the half-historical, half-mythical territories of indios—by White or mixed-race peasants in the early twentieth century. During the presidency of Ramón Cáceres (1906-1911), Juan Manuel abandons a series of locales: from urban and politically turbulent Baní to socially disadvantaged Fundación de Peravia to the destroyed by fire and then expropriated cane fields of Arroyo Pastor (199) to coffee plantations of Las Yaguas, parcelled among his siblings (201). When forced to migrate in this manner, he leads a group of fellow peasants up into the mountain river valley where they fall trees to clear the territory for the village of Arroyo Blanco. During the second presidency of Juan Isidro Jiménez (1914-1916) and the US occupation of 1916, Juan Manuel anticipates that because coffee growing generates more and more profit the capital will catch up with him and seize this land just as it did Arroyo Pastor. This is why he dares to colonize Monte Llano, farther up north, which had been deemed “uninhabitable” (237), “tierras, donde el hombre no había puesto su planta, más que los montaraces en persecución de los animales cimarrones” (228).
Monte Llano reminds of colonial geography in which the North-West and South-West mountains stood for the ultimate habitat of rebellious Indians and, euphemistically, maroons: “allí viven ¡solamente los indios! que comen hasta gente y matan al que se atreve a llegar allí” (230). As can be seen, in this case “indios” designate Taínos and perhaps euphemistically include maroons who, similarly to irrational runaway animals, inhabit the fearsome forests. For local peasants, the mountains signify Afro-indigenous sacred places. As Juan Manuel advances into their interior, two monstrous snakes come forward to protect the land and he has no choice but to slaughter them. Tony Castanha suggests that “In indigenous Caribbean tradition, the energy of the serpent represents the Earth Mother and the waters of life. It is a symbol of continuity” (xvi) that Juan Manuel seeks to interrupt. The association of snakes with the indigenous and, by metonymy, Afro-Creoles stems from their ample knowledge of healing venomous snakebites with herbs and ointments. Since Juan Manuel is too old and feeble to settle in Monte Llano, his mission consists in demonstrating the territory is inhospitable to future colonizers. Supposedly, time “irá borrando poco a poco” (235) the myth—which he refuses to articulate as a historical memory—of the indigenous and Afro-Creole cultural survival.

Amidst the rampant racial discrimination and exclusionary zoning, it is all the more outrageous that Billini represented La Montería as the only safe place, an authentic shelter for Hispanics against Haitian and later Santana’s invasions. Although subtler and more aesthetically accomplished, Billini prepared the ground for the blatant twentieth-century racism of the like of Billini Brea. He pioneered the trespassing and appropriation of Afro-Creole physical and symbolic spaces of social integration and resistance when he asserted in relation to La Montería, in the private property of the merchant Don Antonio, that “En ningún tiempo la planta de intrusos invasores había hollado la verdura de su suelo. En las diferentes guerras fue antiguo refugio de las familias banilejas” (233). In the novel “las familias banilejas” comprise Engracia and Antoñita’s families when Santana’s thug Musié who “no podía negar que era un rayano de las líneas de Haití, hombre sin principio de gente y otras cosas por el estilo (224) and Solito of “color indio” (234) loot this peaceful sanctuary and murder its “legal” owner Don Antonio.

While the men of thereby racialized Musié and Solito ascend in silence and “invade” the mountains, the novel inverts dominant power relations and reinterprets La Montería as a Catholic sanctum of Dominican integrity where some La Francisquera had safeguarded the patroness of Our Lady of Regla “para librarla del pillaje” (233). Again, this narrative maneuver goes against the grain of
popular belief according to which the devotee hid the image “entre los cerros del Cañafistula” to the West of Baní, in the surroundings of the “cañada de Nuestra Señora” so called to commemorate the effigy’s rescue in the local topography (233). Neither is this arbitrary displacement of Regla’s sanctuary reasonable from within the Catholic perspective that claims images’ refusal to leave a specific holy site, their clenching to the singularity. There must have been diverse suspects to abduct the image of the patroness in the novel’s timeframe, prior to 1814 when La Francisquera handed rescued Regla to the Fray Vicente González Urra. Billini likely failed to find out whether the potential pillage involved *Filibusteros*, Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, or *Insurgentes* inspired by Bolívar during the period of the España Boba (1809-1821). However, the text implies a high degree of probability that the perpetrators of the unrealized pillage could have been Haitians. This viewpoint differed drastically from the beliefs of Afro-Dominicans themselves who often have attributed the origins of saints and virgins of colour to Haiti and Cuba, in this way identifying the neighbour countries as important religious and spiritual centres.41

Parallel to La Francisquera’s fleeing with, and her protection of the Virgin of Regla against the Black Madonna’s reinterpretation as a Haitian Vodou deity, Engracia shields her European-style heliotrope from any such rereading. Structurally, the rescue of Regla precedes the episode in which Engracia cannot separate from the heliotrope even as she runs for her life: “no quiso dejarlo en el pueblo la noche que salieron, y prefirió echarse el tarro al hombro, mortificándose al sentir su peso por aquellos caminos enlodados; y llevándolo, como si en él se encerrara algo sagrado, con aquella religiosidad con que las vírgenes antiguas, cuando acosadas de sus hogares por enemigas invasiones, cargaban sus dioses penates” (237). Here Billini marked the vector of Engracia’s heliotrope devotion as telluric again because she drags the heavy pot along muddy roads. The heliotrope’s herbaceous power dislodges indigenous and Afro-Creole numinous entities from their historical territories as well as the Virgin Mary and Catholic Saints by occupying a place consecrated by the metropolitan history, that of a Penate deity of ancient Latin peoples.

Billini maintained the Spanish genealogy of Regla’s image against “una falsa tradición del vulgo” that described its magical apparition “en las cabritas del Paso de los Hierros” as well as against another popular tradition that attributed its origin to stealing from Cuba (233). Yet he emphasized African inspirations in her devotion and insisted that it was not in Cañafistol “donde se adulterase el origen y la historia de ese culto” (234): “Esos versos apócrifos que se cantan en el novenario de su
fiesta, llamando la negra africana, y atribuyéndole su aparición en la guerra de los españoles contra los moros, no fue la Francisquera quien los llevó a Bani” (234). If not her, Banilejos identifying with other Afro-Americans through the mediation of this Black Madonna “adulterated”—and we know they were indeed faithful to—the cult’s history. This again testified to long-lasting oppositions between Dominicans of Spanish and African descent. Although in the nineteenth century the Church did counter Afro-American heritages, at the same time it competed for its congregation of colour alluring them with “sus alegres repiques” while calling all “feligreses al rezo de las noveñas donde se cantan también lindos villancicos que ensalzan a la morena reina de los cielos” (82). Tejeda Ortiz confirms that up until recently the Church attempted to gain over the unorthodox followers of San Juan Bautista in Bani, albeit to rather modest results.42

Despite his reluctance, Billini described Our Lady of Regla as “negra africana” in the Afro-Banilejo “apocrypha” and “morena reina de los cielos” in the official religious discourse. Unfortunately, nowadays the effigy of the patroness of Bani displays a White face and hands and niveous vestment in stark contrast to the Cuban patroness of the Havana bay affectionately called La Negrita, “the only Marian image in Cuba considered to be black” (Perez 203).43 Regla’s “manto azul” (Bani 94) is also missing perhaps because the combination of white and blue would suggest the traditional colours of Yemayá. Another clue in the novel that insinuates the Afro-Cuban Oricha is Felipe Ozán’s aunt Candelaria Ozán of “color casi indio” and “advenediza” in Bani (49). As is known, Cuban Santería lucumí recodes the Virgin of Candelaria—known as La Morenita—as the Oricha Oyá, scandalous deity of fierce winds that bring a change of weather. As a non-institutionalized religion, Lucumí does not worship a uniform pantheon of deities and varies greatly across religious communities, but the popular belief oftentimes regards Yemayá, the foremother of all Orichas, and Oyá, the queen of the cemetery, as major antagonists. Candelaria competes with the two protagonists and devotees of Regla for Enrique Gómez’s love and is responsible for the first “gota de hiel” in the idyll of Engracia’s romance.

Candelaria’s gall also corrodes the social fabric as she comes to represent meaningless turn-of-the-century civil wars in the Dominican Republic. Once the novena of Regla’s fiesta patronal approaches its end, the rumour of the revolution leaks in and disturbs the festivity: “Repentinamente corre un rumor, crece, se hace alarmante, y ya sin disimulo, sin guardar más misterio, se cuela en todas partes … hace cerrar las puertas que estaban abiertas; desbarata las cantinas, partiendo por la mitad la
décima que está cantando el trovador en porfía; se mete sin respeto en la misma Iglesia, en donde ya principia alguna vieja beata los rezos del “Ave María”; cruza la sabana, traspasa el monte” (141-2). The movement of this rumour resembles the blowing of the wind and installs the natural element of Candelaria-Oyá. Her ruthlessness causes the murder of Don Antonio and imprisonment of Don Postumio while she benefits from the insidious Santana regime as well as from the legitimate, yet corrupt liberal government (244-5). Bani returns to peace only after Candelaria moves away in the role of the general Pío del Monte’s concubine: “Desde aquel entonces cesaron en Bani los chismes y las persecuciones políticas” (336). Interestingly, her notorious prototype was the paternal grandmother of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, Silveria Valdés Morales, native of Bani and owner of a “pulpería de segunda escala” (Hernández González 17). The Cuban connection existed through her union to Trujillo’s paternal grandfather, medical practitioner José Trujillo Monagas, who eventually became the second police chief of Havana in 1882 after abandoning Silveria Valdés and their son José in the Dominican Republic (Hernández González 20).

Billini’s writing demonstrates what Scheer calls a passage from “a black image of Mary” to “an image of a black Mary” (1436). The Blackness of Regla, and even more so the identification of Afro-Banilejos with her, likely disturbed Billini. His fixation on the exact provenance of this Marian cult as well as his iconoclast sentiment surfaced in his correspondence with Meriño: “Me importa mucho saber de dónde vino la devoción de la Virgen de Regla, y cuál fue la provincia de España que primero le rindió culto” (Baní y la novela de Billini 252). Meriño was unable to satisfy his friend’s curiosity; he merely pointed out that the fiesta patronal of Bani, November 21, coincided with the Catholic-wide feast of the Presentation of Mary in the Temple, adding that “Por qué se llama de Regla, no sé” (253). However, I suspect that the Archbishop’s ignorance in this matter did not stop Billini. Apparently, the author of Baní conducted some ethnographic research: “Lo de Francisca la Francisquera es recogido de los viejos de Bani, y fue cierto también que una vez salvó la imagen de un pillaje o incendio que hubo” (260). Ironically, Billini’s extreme Hispanophile bias distorted his research and denied the rich cosmopolitan, albeit far from nonviolent, Spanish history. Billini and others’ rhetorical negation of the cult’s African roots and inspiration justified a later actual “whitening” of the image, the destiny it shared with San Juan Bautista. However, San Juan Bautista was restored to his darker color because the image belonged to Afro-Dominican practitioners rather than to the hegemonic religious institution. Instead, Our Lady of Regla of Bani remains light-skinned unlike the Spanish “original” and her earlier
local image. In the end, pursuing their specific interests and in keeping with their worldview, illiterate Black and mixed-race peasants managed to transmit stories more akin to the Spanish cultural archive than those made up by Caribbean elites.

**Conclusions**

*Baní o Engracia y Antoñita* is an odd foundational romance if we consider the dynamics of its proliferating but failed love stories. On the one hand, failure and fluctuations of luck are inherent in the romance genre and represent social and political obstacles that stand in the way of desire which, in Sommer’s words, doubles itself “at personal and political levels” (48). In this sense Billini’s novel goes much farther toward legitimizing miscegenation than the Cuban classic *Cecilia Valdés* or the Puerto Rican *La cuarterona* (1857, first staged in 1867). Since Cecilia’s maternal grandmother Josefa is already mixed-race and collaborates in the racist project of *mejorar la raza* through miscegenation, her granddaughter Cecilia is at least an “octooon.” Yet the colonial authority represented by Alcalde Mayor Fernando O’Reilly pronounces her as a predestined concubine for Whites (702), that is as unsuitable for marriage. According to the legal language, the only explanation for a male desire toward Cecilia is her sexual attractiveness and relaxed sexual mores in the slave economy (702), in addition to something like a criminal call of blood since both Cecilia and Julia, from *La cuarterona*, are half-sisters of their suitors. It also seems to have been beyond the limits of representation for Villaverde and Tapia y Rivera to envision a female desire directed at the racialized other, which Billini accomplished. Although the Dominican writer did not dare stage the consummation of Eugenia María, Engracia, or Antoñita’s romantic relationships with Enrique Gómez, he normalized in writing what must have been a common practice in the Dominican Republic. While public opinion discourages Felipe Ozán’s behaviour as a direct physical assault (48, 50, 54), once Enrique Gómez dematerializes his courtship, White Dominicans, specifically women themselves, welcome his advances.

The symbolic “concession” of White Banilejas by Billini happens under the tacit condition of Afro-Créole cultural appropriation. Billini likened the women characters to flowers and as Eugenia María, Engracia, and Antoñita give the aroma of their hearts away, the narration seizes Afro-indigenous ethnobotanical knowledge and classifies nature deliberately into native and invasive species. Likewise, García Godoy incorporated Rufino into discourse—if only to discharge him as indigestible in the end—on the condition of dissociating his religious rites from their affinities with
Haitian vodou. Far from improving mental health and mending ample social networks as faith healing used to in the early modern period, in their versions of therapeutic writing Billini and García Godoy sought to regenerate the national community on misguided premises. Such writing left an uneasy legacy of intricate social fabric in which meanings easily take on their opposite and histories recede before diverse uprooted senses and vibes that, as a result, guard memories of vulnerable communities better than books do.

Notes

1. For criticism of Puerto Rican naturalism and the discourse of sick nation, see Luis Felipe Díaz’s *De charcas, espejos, infantes y velorios en la literatura puertorriqueña* and Benigno Trigo’s *Subjects of Crisis*.
2. Engracia envies her fiancé Enrique Gómez’s first love Eugenia María because “comete la barbaridad de matar con remedios el pelo que se corta para que no le nazca más, afea su semblante sufriendo los dolores de las quemadas de esas tinturas” (150).
3. Meriño protested against Eugenia María’s farewell letter (*Bani y la novela de Billini* 255), perhaps making Billini add that “a haber sido conocida [la carta], habría bastado para que la Iglesia no admitiese a la aspirante entre las vírgenes del Señor” (173).
4. Rather than “una religión sin nombre”, I interpret this situation as a proliferation of euphemistic ways to refer to multiple local non-institutionalized Afro-Dominican religions and healing arts. On the other hand, even though initially vague, by now the words misterios and their servidores, or portadores have acquired significant terminological precision.
5. Although, perhaps because of persecution, harming would almost disappear from Dominican vudú later in the twentieth century, it is still at play in *Rufinito* as we will see. Likewise, Catholicism camouflages African-inspired religions in the Cuban classic *Cecilia Valdés* (second, revised and extended edition 1882), in which the old mixed-race Josefa is a devoted Christian and the only hint at her Afro-Caribbean gusto is her use of the adjective “espiritada”, even though pejorative, as well as her variegated collection of Christian paraphernalia, which reveals a certain cult of power objects. Compare the novel with the twentieth-century cinematographic adaptation by Humberto Solás (*Cecilia* 1982) opening with a scene in which Josefa explains to the child Cecilia Santería lucumí correspondences between Changó and Saint Barbara and the need of African deities to literally and figuratively disguise themselves in the New World. Although I agree with Elizabeth Perez that Cirilo Villaverde did not “his dependency on Lucumi mythology in the development of a central character, the wet nurse and Mammy-figure, Maria de Regla Santa Cruz” (210), I suspect that the racial and socio-economic differences between free and property-owing Josefa and enslaved and poor Maria de Regla account for the spectrum of their religiosity as well as for distinct approaches to their representations by the author.
6. Among other reasons is the heyday of the sugar plantation system and a huge increase in the import of slaves from West Africa to Cuba between 1725 and 1875. Europeanized Espiritismo, in vogue across the Americas and the Caribbean at the time, predictably swept the Dominican Republic.
7. On the importance of native American and Caribbean botanical knowledge for the development of scientific empiricism, see Pablo Gómez’s “Incommensurable Epistemologies? The Atlantic Geography of Healing in the Early Modern Caribbean.”
8. According to *Rufinito*: “Aunque de muy pronunciado tipo indio, en él [Santana] se han fundido, han puesto su sello elementos étnicos diversos” (17). As Heuraux’s tyranny exacerbates in Francisco Xavier Billini Brea’s fictionalized historical biography *Juan Manuel: Bani, el amargo café y las montoneras* (published posthumously in 2002), Hispanic *Banilejos* discredit the dictator through his alleged connections to Haiti and vodou. If first he appears as a Black Dominican, disproving of, yet complying with the racial segregation (88), later the peasants see him dance with local White girls and believe that his power stems from his adherence to Haitian vodou: “De donde saldría ese haitiano que pudo montarse en la silla habiendo tantos hombres buenos. Yo creo que ese hombre tiene negocios con el Diablo” (120), or “dicen que en Haiti le arreglaron para que no le entren las balas. Pero dicen también que desde que él vendió la Iglesia de la Altagracia está loco, que su castigo le vendrá de ahí” (126). Unlike many “good” Dominicans, Heuraux simultaneously enthrones on the presidential seat and manages to mount a horse, which in terms of vodou confers on him semi-divine powers. What transpires in this episode is a popular belief in the efficiency of Haitian harming rites since now the author expects the intervention of the Dominican patroness, the neglected Virgin of Highest Grace, to overthrow the dictator.
9. In “Luis Pie” the delirious Haitian *batey* worker relies on Bonyé for ultimate comforting and sense-making in an alien and in comprehensible Dominican milieu. The Dominican soldier who has been beating Luis Pie suddenly “comprendió que por duro que le pegara Luis Pie no se daría cuenta de ello. No podía darse cuenta, porque iba caminando como un borracho, mirando hacia el cielo y hasta ligeramente sonreído” (16). Thus Bosch structures *vodou* as subtracting Luis Pie from pain and humiliation and hence transcending harsh material and social realms.

10. *Trilogía patriótica* introduces the modern narrator in Dominican literature since it maintains internal variable focalization (Genette 189); as Bruno Rosario Candeler sustains about Guanuma “cualquier lector desprevenido podría pensar que el autor de Guanuma simpatiza con la posición de Santana, y no es así; su identificación está con los patriotas revolucionarios, aunque narre la historia desde la ‘perspectiva’ de los santanistas” (77).

11. Frauke Gewecke added José Gabriel Garcia’s *Compendio de la Historia de Santo Domingo* (1867), José Joaquin Pérez’s poetry collection *Fantasías indígenas* (1877), and Salomé Ureña’s poem “Anacaona” (1880) as antecedents to *Enriquillo*, published in 1882 (193). What nuances unfavorable readings of Galván’s novel is that mixed-race Dominicans had long since dissociated race from biological overdetermination and had been referred to as *indios* since at least the eighteenth century. In this sense, Guarocuya’s negotiations with as well as both direct and camouflaged resistance to Spanish rule could have resonated with Black experiences in Eastern Hispaniola. While Spanish colonists did employ Tainos to fight Black uprisings and vice versa (Guitar 360), this does not override the importance of positive Black-indigenous cultural encounters and collaborations as, for instance, medical and religious practices reveal.

12. While I disapprove of García Godoy’s metaphoric transfer of Afro-Creole ritual possession onto the domain of nationalism, I am aware that by analyzing his rhetoric I repeat his gesture to an extent. At the same time, I resist an impulse toward partisan, “beautiful” subaltern histories. An interesting recent allegory of Dominican-Haitian relations is José María Cabral’s movie *Carpinteros* (2017) in which the Black rayano Julián and mixed-race Yanelly look for love at the Najayo prison in San Cristobal, metaphorically imprisoned and burdened by their violent pasts.

13. When by the twentieth century many African diasporas had developed multiple mechanisms of communal solidarity against racism broadly based on the pride of self-affirmation, Silvio Torres-Saillant registers higher vulnerability of Afro-Dominicans, who had less of such mechanisms, when they faced the “crude” racism of *Trujillato* (138-9).

14. Both Engracia and Antoñita are paternal orphans while Don Postumio’s name suggests he was born after his father’s death. All mature men in the novel (Don Postumio, Don Antonio, and Billini who appears as the editor) prefer queridas to marriage. Poorer than Antoñita, Engracia cannot study or play as she does needle work all day to sustain her family.

15. On the “relationship between medical geography and the literary picturesque” (505) in the colonial Anglophone marriage. Poorer than Antoñita, Engracia cannot study or play as she does needle work all day to sustain her family.

16. On race in Espiritismo see the next section.

17. Gastón Deligne in his “Balada de las tentaciones” (1907) from the poetry collection *Galaripsos* interpreted sublime landscapes such as the mountain and the sea and plants and trees such as mango, *manzanillo* (Hippomane mancinella), and *quibe* as inspiring life and death indistinguishably:

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La flor de quibe
No por ligeros antojos
me abro a la margen del río,
sino para ser ¡oh mío!
mayor gloria de tus ojos.
Tengo virtud, además
—como tú te desesperes—
de cerrártelos, si quieres,
para no abrirlas jamás! (144)
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18. Timyan explains that *bayawonn* decreased biodiversity in the dry coastal regions of Haiti, yet it “performs poorly on rocky sites” where *Acacia tortuosa* and cacti predominate, “at elevations higher than 400 m” and “in areas with rainfall amounts greater than 1000 mm” (4).

19. See the English translation by Kavin Meehan and Marie Léticée in *Callaloo*, vol. 23, no. 4, p. 1387.

20. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert asserts that Jacque Roumain’s *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (1944), Jacque-Stephen Alexis’s *Les arbres musiciens* (1957), Marie Chauvet’s *Amour* (1968), and Pierre Clitandre’s *Cathédrale du mois d’août* (1979) “demonstrate that the Haitian novel has been, above all, a chronicle of the nation’s unimaginable ecological catastrophe” (110).

21. Tropical Africa and Brazil are two other important regions where *P. juliflora* grows.

22. A comparable dematerialization of Hinduism occurred in European spiritism.

23. According to *Atlas de biodiversidad y recursos naturales de la República Dominicana*: “El matorral seco es predominante en las regiones Noroeste, Sur y Suroeste” (66) and occupies roughly 12% of the Dominican territory (68). For more on the part of the mountains in Afro-Dominican imagery see the next section.
24. On the terms of this search see Erika von Erhardt-Siebold’s article “The Heliotrope Tradition.”
25. I might be overreading here, yet even given the disproportionate attention race received in the Caribbean at the time, I believe that Billini coordinated Engracia—and Antoñita for she taught these particular verses to her friend—with the narrator of the Song of Songs who takes pride in her skin colour (“nigra” and “fusca” in the Vulgate translation) because of its affinity with other sacred objects such as “tabernacula Cedar” and “pelles Salomonis.”
26. Billini did envision Bani as a collection of young marriageable women, and Enrique Gómez does look for entertainment and a potential fiancée; but Engracia’s heliotrope literally hypnotizes and turns him motionless: “Una casualidad hizo que él pasara al tiempo mismo que ella principió a hablar en su delectación con ese arbolito que parecía estar encantado, especie de talismán, de perfume venenoso, que había despertado en su alma las fibras de ese sentimiento dormido que se llama amor. Detenido allí al oír la dulcesima voz, como si oyera una sirena, quedó conmovido” (67-8). It is noteworthy that the scene activates the senses of hearing and smell prior to vision since plants were believed to “talk,” which is why there existed numerous floral dictionaries translating their esoteric messages into a human language.
27. According to Sarah Dykstra, what Pliny meant by the Magi was to a lesser extent “a generic group of contemporaries who dabbled in the various magical arts” and more “a corpus of magical writings which were vaguely associated with the names of Zoroaster and Osthanes” (22) but also of Pythagoras and Pseudo-Democritus (the Hellenistic Egyptian Bolus of Mendes) both of whom Pliny believed had visited the Magi of Persia, Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt (Book XXIV 112-9).
28. As a dialectical man, Don Postumio “Siempre estaba a caza de una discusión, y empeñoso de encontrarla, decia: ‘Yo quiero luz, la luz que no me dan los libros; esa que hallan los entendimientos pesados en el choque y la contradicción de las ideas’” (56).
30. On the legislation prohibiting the procession to celebrate the Epiphany in 1884 and cabildos’ structural reorganization, see Fernando Ortiz’s Los cabildos y la fiesta acrobacuana del Día de Reyes (11).
31. For a classical study of Black Madonnas’ origins see Leonard Moss and Stephen Cappannari’s “In Quest of the Black Virgin.”
32. On two distinct approaches to Christian sacred imagery as either artwork or wonder-working relics in the Reformation/Counter-Reformation framework see Hans Belting’s Likeness and Presence (484-5).
33. Sometimes theologians promoted the view of Mary as the bride from the Song of Songs: “Most commentaries on the ‘nigra sum’ passage also interpreted the bride’s blackness allegorically, as the soul fallen from grace, or as the Gentile Church” (Scheer 1436). The author of this latter interpretation, the third-century theologian Origen, “saw the role of the Gentile Church in a positive light, which is why he advocated a translation of the verse as ‘I am black and beautiful’” (Scheer 1436).
34. Linnaeus, whom Billini deemed incapable of accounting for the Dominican biodiversity, classified humanity into four colour groups (black, white, red, and yellow) in the first half of the eighteenth century, although fortunately his concept did not become popular yet then.
35. Fernando Guillamas y Galiano in his Historia de Sanlúcar de Barrameda described that “No hay bajél alguno de los de nuestra nación, y muchos estrangeros Católicos, que navegando solos ó en escuadra, dejen de saludar á esta Señora [de Regla] al descubrir su casa, con salva numerosa de artillería, al entrar ó salir de la ensenada de Cádiz ó barra de Sanlúcar, cuyas aguas registran en mucha distancia desde las ventanas y terreno esterior del Monasterio” (156).
36. The church of Our Lady of Regla in the town of Regla, Cuba displays slave chains and an anchor along a high beam to the right of the chapel entrance.
37. For a detailed analysis of the hato economy in a comparable colonial setting in Puerto Rico, see David Stark’s Slave Families and the Hato Economy in Puerto Rico.
38. Walter Cordero claims that the book was written in the 1950s during the most asphyxiating period of Trujillo’s rule (15). For more on racist attacks on Heureaux, see Bernando Vega’s La agenda pendiente, p. 27.
39. By extension these characteristics also apply to Rancho de Matas (227).
40. Snakes may also refer to Damballah Wedo of vudú.
41. See Tejeda Ortiz’s San Juan Bautista y la zarandunga de Bani on the popular legend that attributes the provenance of the saint’s image, drums, ritual rhythms, and dance to Haiti (80-1).
42. Earlier in Bani, the San Juan Bautista procession used to enter the main cathedral and participate in the Catholic mass on the feast day of the Saint after which they performed Sarandunga in the central plaza, but because of occasional conflicts with local Church authorities sanjuaneros no longer integrate smoothly with the wider religious and social community (Tejeda Ortiz, San Juan Bautista 90-1).
43. Unlike, for instance, the “mulata” national patroness of Cuba, the Virgin of Charity of El Cobre.
44. Due to the negative representation of both her racial background and crass nature, the censure of the novel by the dictator Trujillo became so proverbial that during post-Trujillato the dissident newsweekly Ahora included in its February
15, 1962 issue a selection from Baní, “which it touted as ‘the novel that Trujillo banned’” (Russ 385), while in 1973 the editors of Baní dedicated the novel to the martyrs of the era of Trujillo.
Conclusions

Throughout this project, I have explored the work of four writers—Eugenio María de Hostos, Amelia Francasci, Francisco Gregorio Billini, and Federico García Godoy. However, there was a fifth, shadow figure that touches on, complements, or disrupts their writing—that of the Archbishop Fernando Arturo de Meriño. That his ecclesiastic authority spread onto creative writing is less surprising if we remember the array of shadow economies in the Caribbean, including moral and political economies of intoxication and affliction. I have suggested interpreting all five figures as founding fathers and mothers of the modern nation state. However, once again, what exactly did they found?

As a self-exiled ultra-liberal, Hostos tried to institute critical thinking in the Dominican Republic. That is, at the end of the nineteenth century, he founded the Normal School where he taught students not to assimilate ready-made knowledge but to think for themselves and, if necessary, to challenge all kinds of assumptions, prejudice, and authority. His students, as future teachers, were then supposed to disseminate this mercury knowledge across the country. Despite what, from today’s perspective, we perceive as Hostos’ gender bias in, for instance, his lecture *La educación científica de la mujer* (1873), his example encouraged Salomé Ureña to open her Instituto de Señoritas to teach Dominican women science instead of house-keeping. Hostos’ project failed because of the intervention of Meriño, a conservative figure after all despite his short-lived flirting with liberalism (Cassá). As President of the Republic, not only did Meriño decree summary executions of his ungovernable subjects in 1881 but he also prepared the ground for the first lasting dictatorship in modern Dominican history—that of Ulises Heureaux. Although the previous presidents Pedro Santana and Buenaventura Báez had not been more scrupulous in their methods of government, Meriño and Heureaux represented the liberal *Azul* party, which means that both learnt to negotiate discourse and to dress their speeches with a flare of modernization to entice urban elites. In this sense of direct opposition to Meriño, it makes sense to call Hostos “apóstol de la verdad,” as reads his tombstone in the Dominican Panteón de la Patria. Otherwise, I agree with Enrique Anderson Imbert, who—meaning it as a compliment—wondered in his acclaimed *Historia de la Literatura Hispanoamericana* (1955) whether Hostos was instead an apostate (218).
I have stressed that Hostos and Meriño did share a lot: both belonged to a dominant White minority, both differentiated themselves from the uneducated vulgo. However, had Hostos and Meriño been asked about their narco-habits, I suspect that only Hostos would have acknowledged his addictions. And although it is unlikely that someone would have directed the same question to Francasci, she replied affirmatively into this void of not being addressed. She reacted to the non-question about her “being-on-drugs” within the economy in which she participated informally yet her contribution went unrecognized.

In this thesis I have shown that a serious narcoanalysis became a means of, but also an indicator of critical pharmaco-thinking. Although Deligne wrote odes of the Afro-indigenous narcotic quibey, he must have never succumbed to its magic. Neither did Billini nor García Godoy lose their heads to a spiritual drumming in a hot Caribbean night. I did not claim that had they “loosened” their selves under the influence of ritual drugs and alcohol, this surrender alone would have guaranteed their open-mindedness toward other cultures. However, because aesthetic vanguards since Rubén Darío and Enrique Gómez Carrillo opted for this Bohemian path, I would like to stress that most turn-of-the-century outrageous ethnographers of the likes of Billini and García Godoy were not quite there yet. Contrary to this, Hostos and Francasci, elitist and haughty as they were, felt frustration whenever they sensed their inability to share in common, “innocent” intoxications. Therefore, I have interpreted their narcotic habits and the introspection triggered by those as democratizing.

Rumours circulated about Francasci’s affair with Meriño. Through gossiping, a kind of tabooed and informal knowledge, Dominicans also learnt that Meriño was the reason of Billini’s niece María Nicolasa’s extramarital pregnancy. In addition to their rivalry over the Archiepiscopate, this accounts for a definite break between Billini’s nephew, padre Francisco Xavier Billini, and Meriño, according to the historian Roberto Cassá (64). Yet Billini the writer did not seem to be annoyed with Meriño, as he kept their close friendship and sent him the drafts of Baní o Engracia y Antoñita for editing. Why? On the one hand, Billini defended extramarital relations. On the other hand, in this way Billini—and Francasci alike—sought to avoid censorship by allying with the main censoring institution, the Church. However, I contend that they were not guided by fear alone. During the fin-de-siècle, the Church continued to be the principal controller of “energies of intoxication.” Hostos, Francasci, Billini, and García Godoy all attempted to win over and to translate religious ecstasy into their secular styles.
Their pursuit of religious ecstasy and efforts to channel it in a new way, through narcotics and writing, became a common point of departure for the foregoing writers, the main difference being that Billini and García Godoy intuited that, in the predominantly Black Dominican Republic, African-inspired rites held a greater potential than official Catholicism. On the other hand, Hostos and Francasci integrated thinking and writing. Billini and García Godoy, instead, sought profit from the healing and harming substances and rites, expropriated from the Afro-indigenous community. However, Billini and García Godoy as well—not unlike Hostos and Francasci—valued political and aesthetic modernity and emancipations. For example, in the preface to *Rufinito*, García Godoy lamented an outdated style of the Dominican letters. Yet, Billini and García Godoy did not mind getting to that cherished modernity by means of social exclusions and cultural disenfranchisement of the othered Afro-Dominicans.

Liberal-minded García Godoy reduced *Rufinito*’s narrative line *ad absurdum* by exposing the lawlessness prevailing during many nineteenth-century “revolutions.” In his story the *Dones*, respectable doctors and lawyers, lynched *mulato* Rufino under the cover of the night. To make the reading public sympathize with Rufino, García Godoy—notorious for his anti-Haitian sentiment—made his protagonist swear across the border. In this way and despite his being a spiritual leader of a Black mutual-aid society *hermandad* of Holy Spirit, the narration forces Rufino to deny cultural and religious affinities between Haitians and Afro-Dominicans. However, because García Godoy accused Rufino of participating in outlawed Black rites like the funeral *baile*, the reading public misjudged the narration in favour of the criminal elites. Rufino’s misplaced hatred and his murder left a non-healing wound around which Dominican nationalism consolidated.

In this way, the indolent and biased author transforms Rufino into a *pharmakos*. Moreover, Rufino is not given enough space to manifest his inner resistance; he plays his role with resignation. By contrast, Francasci realized that personal pharmaco-resistances are not safeguarded from appropriation for the sake of some “common” good. She might have ignored any feasible alternatives yet denounced such a state of things. In *Francisca Martinoff*, Francasci represented yet another “revolution,” half a civil war, half a coup d’état, as a masculine enterprise and contrasted it with her protagonist’s non-radical rejection of the traditional roles of mother and wife. Francisca Martinoff reaches to drugs for answers. On the one hand, cordial allows her to divert her husband’s continuing assaults, in this way dodging imminent violence. When Francisca Martinoff opts to end an unwanted pregnancy and to
commit suicide, it is a chaos in her medicine cabinet that allows for a disguise of her protest as a fortunate mistake. Despite her sneaking proceeding, the operative society appropriates Francisca’s alma after death. Discourse ties her soul to the world underneath while Francisca, unfree to roam again, finds herself transformed into a remedy for her indolent husband, her adulterous doctor, science, and humanity in general. However, García Godoy and Francasci’s ambivalent—if contrasting—narrative positioning in the text perhaps mattered little, given the pervasiveness of uncritical reading habits in the Caribbean.

These uncritical reading habits led Hostos and Francasci to suspect that the institution of literature took part in narcotic trafficking. Once ingenuous, unaccustomed readers immersed themselves in a fictional universe, it altered their state of mind and mood so powerfully that they lost their ability to relate what they read to the basic premises of Enlightenment secularism such as the rule of law, the sanctity and inviolability of human life, and the “natural” drive toward freedom and happiness. When Hostos wrote his politico-philosophical novel La peregrinación de Bayoán, he expected the reading public to resent the absurd, oversaturated colonial discourses of decency, loyalty, and sexual hygiene. After Hostos realized that readers misinterpreted his story as moralizing and modelling propriety, he halted all literary activity and dedicated himself to direct education in the hopes to cultivate critical thinking. Francasci cared less for the social impact of her work and sided with narcotic writing because it allowed her “salir de sí misma” (Francisca Martinoff 98). She sought this narcotic withdrawal out of the tedious everyday and verging on the experience of ecstasy, of the “opening of beings beyond themselves and toward the other” (Hynes 59). However, Francasci rejected the critical potential of a narcotic trip, so cherished by Hostos. She renounced the return journey, the coming back to senses, which Hostos understood as the opportunity to experience fissures in the otherwise thoroughly naturalized social reality.

In sum, I argue that Hostos’ writing serves as a theoretical paradigm for a fin-de-siècle Caribbean pharmaco-corpus. His restless, post-Hegelian writing inspired and joined other Puerto Rican and Dominican voices that, if read together, displace the nineteenth-century canon consolidated around the discourse of nationalism or its aberration—a non-sovereign and, for that reason, diseased nation. Unlike a bound cause-effect relationship between colonization and disease, drugs plunge us into the realm of indeterminacy, alternative meanings, and epistemological challenges to institutionally-enhanced truths. Francasci could have never overwritten the diagnosis of a hysteric had she not...
questioned her contradictory and ineffective medications. It is at this level of “pharmaceutical styles of thinking and doing” (Quirke 99) rather than at that of a medical diagnosis based on a specialized system of knowledge that Francasci was able to intervene and experiment with alternative treatments. The turn of the century was this unique period when many potent substances had been synthesized, but peripheral societies did not police legitimate and illicit drugs circulation. Additionally, narcotic substances did not receive a definite cultural reading yet. It was up to contemporary intellectuals to redress Romantic ideas on narcotics and make a new sense of modern pharmacopeias. I have drawn largely on Nancy’s argument that sense and the body are in no way opposed as they would be in the dichotomy of transcendence/immanence or idealism/what Nancy calls “idealistic materialisms” (Corpus 95): “Bodies come to weigh against one another, such is the world … This is certainly the way that Psyche is extended, as well as why she knows nothing about it. Psyche, here, is the name of the body, as presupposed neither according to a substratum sunk into matter nor according to an already-given superstratum of self-knowledge” (95). When sense is not given as in Christianity where “A creator contains, retains his creation, and relates it to himself” (107), sense is the result of the spacing of bodies in relation to themselves and to one another. Narcotics exhibit Protean qualities because they change the ways bodies extend themselves, for example, breaching their “intensive/extensive boundary” (95) and opening bodies onto their “fractal interiorities” (Ronell 15). In this manner, intoxication or overflowing [débordement] rearranges the spacing of bodies in the world. Turn-of-the-century narratives suggest that drugs can shift our ossified psychic structures toward decolonization or allow us to endure afflictions. Narcotics can provoke illuminations or delusions, be politically progressive or regressive, ground us in ourselves or invite us to transcend and abandon the distressed body.

In this way, after taking a lengthy detour, pharmacy bring us back to moral philosophy. The writings of Hostos and Francasci, of Billini and García Godoy commented on the problematic of agency, truth, association and dissociation, the proper, propriety, the foreign, and appropriation. Seen from this defocused narcotic angle, though, turn-of-the-century moral philosophy appears less prescriptive, less moralizing. Moral philosophy of the kind Hostos envisioned thinks through many levels of duties and demands pressing, weighing on the body from all directions. It inquires into the ethics of reading and writing in an economically underprivileged country with low literacy levels and interiorized values of the colonizer. Finally, I wrote this thesis as an invitation to read the turn-of-the-
century Hispanic Caribbean with renewed curiosity and a different set of expectations. I have looked closely into under-researched decolonizing efforts in Dominican literature, still awaiting its well-deserved place among major Caribbean literary traditions.

Notes

1. Consider modernistas’ addiction to alcohols, specifically to absinth (ajenjo) in homage to Paul Verlaine. Although I ignore if the Puerto Rican-Jewish writer José Elías Levis experimented with narcotics himself, in his novels Estercolero (1899/1901) and Planta maldita (1906) he suggested parallels between a dispossessed drug addict, “el tipo repulsivo del morfinero, miseria humana que se inyecta morfina en la piel para estar siempre adormilado” (Estercolero 32) and Bohemian artists, similarly surrounded by alcohol, morphine, prostitutes, and domestic violence.
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